

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

No. 8.]

SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1859.

[PRICE 2d.]

A TALE OF TWO CITIES.

In Three Books.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

BOOK THE SECOND. THE GOLDEN THREAD.

CHAPTER VI. HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE.

THE quiet lodgings of Doctor Manette were in a quiet street-corner not far from Soho-square. On the afternoon of a certain fine Sunday when the waves of four months had rolled over the trial for treason, and carried it, as to the public interest and memory, far out to sea, Mr. Jarvis Lorry walked along the sunny streets from Clerkenwell where he lived, on his way to dine with the Doctor. After several relapses into business-absorption, Mr. Lorry had become the Doctor's friend, and the quiet street-corner was the sunny part of his life.

On this certain fine Sunday, Mr. Lorry walked towards Soho, early in the afternoon, for three reasons of habit. Firstly, because, on fine Sundays, he often walked out, before dinner, with the Doctor and Lucie; secondly, because, on unfavourable Sundays, he was accustomed to be with them as the family friend, talking, reading, looking out of window, and generally getting through the day; thirdly, because he happened to have his own little shrewd doubts to solve, and knew how the ways of the Doctor's household pointed to that time as a likely time for solving them.

A quainter corner than the corner where the Doctor lived, was not to be found in London. There was no way through it, and the front windows of the Doctor's lodgings commanded a pleasant little vista of street that had a congenial air of retirement on it. There were few buildings then, north of the Oxford-road, and forest-trees flourished, and wild flowers grew, and the hawthorn blossomed, in the now vanished fields. As a consequence, country airs circulated in Soho with vigorous freedom, instead of languishing into the parish like stray paupers without a settlement; and there was many a good south wall, not far off, on which the peaches ripened in their season.

The summer light struck into the corner brilliantly in the earlier part of the day; but, when the streets grew hot, the corner was in shadow, though not in shadow so remote but that

you could see beyond it into a glare of brightness. It was a cool spot, staid but cheerful, a wonderful place for echoes, and a very harbour from the raging streets.

There ought to have been a tranquil bark in such an anchorage, and there was. The Doctor occupied two floors of a large still house, where several callings purported to be pursued by day, but whereof little was audible any day, and which was shunned by all of them at night. In a building at the back, attainable by a courtyard where a plane-tree rustled its green leaves, church-organs claimed to be made, and silver to be chased, and likewise gold to be beaten by some mysterious giant who had a golden arm starting out of the wall of the front hall—as if he had beaten himself precious, and menaced a similar conversion of all visitors. Very little of these trades, or of a lonely lodger rumoured to live up stairs, or of a dim coach-trimming maker asserted to have a counting-house below, was ever heard or seen. Occasionally, a stray workman putting his coat on, traversed the hall, or a stranger peered about there, or a distant clink was heard across the courtyard, or a thump from the golden giant. These, however, were only the exceptions required to prove the rule that the sparrows in the plane-tree behind the house, and the echoes in the corner before it, had their own way from Sunday morning unto Saturday night.

Doctor Manette received such patients here as his old reputation, and its revival in the floating whispers of his story, brought him. His scientific knowledge, and his vigilance and skill in conducting ingenious experiments, brought him otherwise into moderate request, and he cared as much as he wanted.

These things were within Mr. Jarvis Lorry's knowledge, thoughts, and notice, when he rang the door-bell of the tranquil house in the corner, on the fine Sunday afternoon.

"Doctor Manette at home?"

Expected home.

"Miss Lucie at home?"

Expected home.

"Miss Pross at home?"

Possibly at home, but of a certainty impossible for handmaid to anticipate intentions of Miss Pross, as to admission or denial of the fact.

"As I am at home myself," said Mr. Lorry,

"I'll go up-stairs."

Although the Doctor's daughter had known

nothing of the country of her birth, she appeared to have innately derived from it that ability to make much of little means, which is one of its most useful and most agreeable characteristics. Simple as the furniture was, it was set off by so many little adornments, of no value but for their taste and fancy, that its effect was delightful. The disposition of everything in the rooms, from the largest object to the least; the arrangement of colours, the elegant variety and contrast obtained by thrift in trifles, by delicate hands, clear eyes, and good sense; were at once so pleasant in themselves, and so expressive of their originator, that, as Mr. Lorry stood looking about him, the very chairs and tables seemed to ask him, with something of that peculiar expression which he knew so well by this time, whether he approved?

There were three rooms on a floor, and, the doors by which they communicated being put open that the air might pass freely through them all, Mr. Lorry, smilingly observant of that fanciful resemblance which he detected all around him, walked from one to another. The first was the best room, and in it were Lucie's birds, and flowers, and books, and desk, and work-table, and box of water-colours; the second was the Doctor's consulting-room, used also as the dining-room; the third, changingly speckled by the rustle of the plane-tree in the yard, was the Doctor's bedroom—and there, in a corner, stood the disused shoemaker's bench and tray of tools, much as it had stood on the fifth floor of the dismal house by the wine-shop, in the suburb of Saint Antoine in Paris.

"I wonder," said Mr. Lorry, pausing in his looking about, "that he keeps that reminder of his sufferings by him!"

"And why wonder at that?" was the abrupt inquiry that made him start.

It proceeded from Miss Pross, the wild red woman, strong of hand, whose acquaintance he had first made at the Royal George Hotel at Dover, and had since improved.

"I should have thought——" Mr. Lorry began.

"Pooh! You'd have thought!" said Miss Pross; and Mr. Lorry left off.

"How do you do?" inquired that lady then—sharply, and yet as if to express that she bore him no malice.

"I am pretty well, I thank you," answered Mr. Lorry, with meekness, "how are you?"

"Nothing to boast of," said Miss Pross.

"Indeed?"

"Ah! indeed!" said Miss Pross. "I am very much put out about my Ladybird."

"Indeed?"

"For gracious sake say something else besides 'indeed,' or you'll fidget me to death," said Miss Pross: whose character (dissociated from stature) was shortness.

"Really, then?" said Mr. Lorry as an amendment.

"Really, is bad enough," returned Miss Pross, "but better. Yes, I am very much put out."

"May I ask the cause?"

"I don't want dozens of people who are not at all worthy of Ladybird, to come here looking after her," said Miss Pross.

"Do dozens come for that purpose?"

"Hundreds," said Miss Pross.

It was characteristic of this lady (as of some other people before her time and since) that whenever her original proposition was questioned, she exaggerated it.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lorry, as the safest remark he could think of.

"I have lived with the darling—or the darling has lived with me, and paid me for it; which she certainly should never have done, you may take your affidavit, if I could have afforded to keep either myself or her for nothing—since she was ten years old. And it's really very hard," said Miss Pross.

Not seeing with precision what was very hard, Mr. Lorry shook his head; using that important part of himself as a sort of fairy cloak that would fit anything.

"All sorts of people who are not in the least degree worthy of the pet, are always turning up," said Miss Pross. "When you began it——"

"I began it, Miss Pross?"

"Didn't you? Who brought her father to life?"

"Oh! If *that* was beginning it——" said Mr. Lorry.

"It wasn't ending it, I suppose? I say, when you began it, it was hard enough; not that I have any fault to find with Doctor Manette, except that he is not worthy of such a daughter, which is no imputation on him, for it was not to be expected that anybody should be, under any circumstances. But it really is doubly and trebly hard to have crowds and multitudes of people turning up after him (I could have forgiven him), to take Ladybird's affections away from me."

Mr. Lorry knew Miss Pross to be very jealous, but he also knew her by this time to be, beneath the surface of her eccentricity, one of those unselfish creatures—found only among women—who will, for pure love and admiration, bind themselves willing slaves, to youth when they have lost it, to beauty that they never had, to accomplishments that they were never fortunate enough to gain, to bright hopes that never shone upon their own sombre lives. He knew enough of the world to know that there is nothing in it better than the faithful service of the heart; so rendered and so free from any mercenary taint, he had such an exalted respect for it, that, in the retributive arrangements made by his own mind—we all make such arrangements, more or less—he stationed Miss Pross much nearer to the lower Angels than many ladies immeasurably better got up both by Nature and Art, who had balances at Tellson's.

"There never was, nor will be, but one man worthy of Ladybird," said Miss Pross; "and that was my brother Solomon, if he hadn't made a mistake in life."

Here again: Mr. Lorry's inquiries into Miss Pross's personal history, had established the fact

that her brother Solomon was a heartless scoundrel who had stripped her of everything she possessed, as a stake to speculate with, and had abandoned her in her poverty for evermore, with no touch of compunction. Miss Pross's fidelity of belief in Solomon (deducting a mere trifle for this slight mistake) was quite a serious matter with Mr. Lorry, and had its weight in his good opinion of her.

"As we happen to be alone for the moment, and are both people of business," he said, when they had got back to the drawing-room, and had sat down there in friendly relations, "let me ask you—does the Doctor, in talking with Lucie, never refer to the shoemaking time, yet?"

"Never."

"And yet keeps that bench and those tools beside him?"

"Ah!" returned Miss Pross, shaking her head. "But I don't say he don't refer to it within himself."

"Do you believe that he thinks of it much?"

"I do," said Miss Pross.

"Do you imagine——" Mr. Lorry had begun, when Miss Pross took him up short with: "Never imagine anything. Have no imagination at all."

"I stand corrected; do you suppose—you go so far as to suppose, sometimes?"

"Now and then," said Miss Pross.

"Do you suppose," Mr. Lorry went on, with a laughing twinkle in his bright eye, as it looked kindly at her, "that Doctor Manette has any theory of his own, preserved through all those years, relative to the cause of his being so oppressed; perhaps, even to the name of his oppressor?"

"I don't suppose anything about it but what Ladybird tells me."

"And that is——?"

"That she thinks he has."

"Now don't be angry at my asking all these questions; because I am a mere dull man of business, and you are a woman of business."

"Dull?" Miss Pross inquired, with placidity.

Rather wishing his modest adjective away, Mr. Lorry replied, "No, no, no. Surely not. To return to business:—Is it not remarkable that Doctor Manette, unquestionably innocent of any crime as we are well assured he is, should never touch upon that question? I will not say with me, though he had business relations with me many years ago, and we are now intimate; I will say with the fair daughter to whom he is so devotedly attached, and who is so devotedly attached to him? Believe me, Miss Pross, I don't approach the topic with you, out of curiosity, but out of zealous interest."

"Well! To the best of my understanding, and bad's the best you'll tell me," said Miss Pross, softened by the tone of the apology, "he is afraid of the whole subject."

"Afraid?"

"It's plain enough, I should think, why he may be. It's a dreadful remembrance. Besides that, his loss of himself grew out of it. Not knowing how he lost himself, or how he reco-

vered himself, he may never feel certain of not losing himself again. That alone wouldn't make the subject pleasant, I should think."

It was a profounder remark than Mr. Lorry had looked for. "True," said he, "and fearful to reflect upon. Yet, a doubt lurks in my mind, Miss Pross, whether it is good for Doctor Manette to have that suppression always shut up within him. Indeed, it is this doubt and the uneasiness it sometimes causes me that has led me to our present confidence."

"Can't be helped," said Miss Pross, shaking her head. "Touch that string, and he instantly changes for the worse. Better leave it alone. In short, must leave it alone, like or no like. Sometimes, he gets up in the dead of the night, and will be heard, by us overhead there, walking up and down, walking up and down, in his room. Ladybird has learnt to know then, that his mind is walking up and down, walking up and down, in his old prison. She hurries to him, and they go on together, walking up and down, walking up and down, until he is composed. But he never says a word of the true reason of his restlessness, to her, and she finds it best not to hint at it to him. In silence they go walking up and down together, walking up and down together, till her love and company have brought him to himself."

Notwithstanding Miss Pross's denial of her own imagination, there was a perception of the pain of being monotonously haunted by one sad idea, in her repetition of the phrase, walking up and down, which testified to her possessing such a thing.

The corner has been mentioned as a wonderful corner for echoes; it had begun to echo so resoundingly to the tread of coming feet, that it seemed as though the very mention of that weary pacing to and fro had set it going.

"Here they are!" said Miss Pross, rising to break up the conference; "and now we shall have hundreds of people pretty soon!"

It was such a curious corner in its acoustical properties, such a peculiar Ear of a place, that as Mr. Lorry stood at the open window, looking for the father and daughter whose steps he heard, he fancied they would never approach. Not only would the echoes die away, as though the steps had gone; but, echoes of other steps that never came, would be heard in their stead, and would die away for good when they seemed close at hand. However, father and daughter did at last appear, and Miss Pross was ready at the street door to receive them.

Miss Pross was a pleasant sight, albeit wild, and red, and grim, taking off her darling's bonnet when she came up-stairs, and touching it up with the ends of her handkerchief, and blowing the dust off it, and folding her mantle ready for laying by, and smoothing her rich hair with as much pride as she could possibly have taken in her own hair if she had been the vainest and handsomest of women. Her darling was a pleasant sight too, embracing her and thanking her, and protesting against her taking so much trouble for her—which last she only dared to do

playfully, or Miss Pross, sorely hurt, would have retired to her own chamber and cried. The Doctor was a pleasant sight too, looking on at them, and telling Miss Pross how she spoilt Lucie, in accents and with eyes that had as much spoiling in them as Miss Pross had, and would have had more if it were possible. Mr. Lorry was a pleasant sight too, beaming at all this in his little wig, and thanking his bachelor stars for having lighted him in his declining years to a Home. But, no Hundreds of people came to see the sights, and Mr. Lorry looked in vain for the fulfilment of Miss Pross's prediction.

Dinner time, and still no Hundreds of people. In the arrangements of the little household, Miss Pross took charge of the lower regions, and always acquitted herself marvellously. Her dinners, of a very modest quality, were so well cooked and so well served, and so neat in their contrivances, half English and half French, that nothing could be better. Miss Pross's friendship being of the thoroughly practical kind, she had ravaged Soho and the adjacent provinces, in search of impoverished French, who, tempted by shillings and half-crowns, would impart culinary mysteries to her. From these decayed sons and daughters of Gaul, she had acquired such wonderful arts, that the woman and girl who formed the staff of domestics regarded her as quite a Sorceress, or Cinderella's Godmother: who would send out for a fowl, a rabbit, a vegetable or two from the garden, and change them into anything she pleased.

On Sundays, Miss Pross dined at the Doctor's table, but on other days persisted in taking her meals, at unknown periods, either in the lower regions, or in her own room on the second floor—a blue chamber, to which no one but her Ladybird ever gained admittance. On this occasion Miss Pross, responding to Ladybird's pleasant face and pleasant efforts to please her, unbent exceedingly; so the dinner was very pleasant, too.

It was an oppressive day, and, after dinner, Lucie proposed that the wine should be carried out under the plane-tree, and they should sit there in the air. As everything turned upon her and revolved about her, they went out under the plane-tree, and she carried the wine down for the special benefit of Mr. Lorry. She had installed herself, some time before, as Mr. Lorry's cup-bearer; and while they sat under the plane-tree, talking, she kept his glass replenished. Mysterious backs and ends of houses peeped at them as they talked, and the plane-tree whispered to them in its own way above their heads.

Still, the Hundreds of people did not present themselves. Mr. Darnay presented himself while they were sitting under the plane-tree, but he was only One.

Doctor Manette received him kindly, and so did Lucie. But, Miss Pross suddenly became afflicted with a twitching in the head and body, and retired into the house. She was not unfrequently the victim of this disorder, and she called it, in familiar conversation, "a fit of the jerks."

The Doctor was in his best condition, and

looked specially young. The resemblance between him and Lucie was very strong at such times, and, as they sat side by side, she leaning on his shoulder, and he resting his arm on the back of her chair, it was very agreeable to trace the likeness.

He had been talking, all day, on many subjects and with unusual vivacity. "Pray, Doctor Manette," said Mr. Darnay, as they sat under the plane-tree—and he said it in the natural pursuit of the topic in hand, which happened to be the old buildings of London—"have you seen much of the Tower?"

"Lucie and I have been there; but only casually. We have seen enough of it, to know that it teems with interest; little more."

"I have been there, as you remember," said Darnay, with a smile, though reddening a little angrily, "in another character, and not in a character that gives facilities for seeing much of it. They told me a curious thing when I was there."

"What was that?" Lucie asked.

"In making some alterations, the workmen came upon an old dungeon, which had been, for many years, built up and forgotten. Every stone of its inner wall was covered with inscriptions which had been carved by prisoners—dates, names, complaints, and prayers. Upon a corner stone in an angle of the wall, one prisoner who seemed to have gone to execution, had cut, as his last work, three letters. They were done with some very poor instrument, and hurriedly, with an unsteady hand. At first, they were read as D. I. C.; but, on being more carefully examined, the last letter was found to be G. There was no record or legend of any prisoner with those initials, and many fruitless guesses were made what the name could have been. At length, it was suggested that the letters were not initials, but the complete word, DIG. The floor was examined very carefully under the inscription, and, in the earth beneath a stone, or tile, or some fragment of paving, were found the ashes of a paper, mingled with the ashes of a small leathern case or bag. What the unknown prisoner had written will never be read, but he had written something, and hidden it away to keep it from the gaoler."

"My father!" exclaimed Lucie, "you are ill!"

He had suddenly started up, with his hand to his head. His manner and his look quite terrified them all.

"No, my dear, not ill. There are large drops of rain falling, and they made me start. We had better go in."

He recovered himself almost instantly. Rain was really falling in large drops, and he showed the back of his hand with rain-drops on it. But, he said not a single word in reference to the discovery that had been told of, and, as they went into the house, the business eye of Mr. Lorry either detected, or fancied it detected, on his face, as it turned towards Charles Darnay, the same singular look that had been upon it when it turned towards him in the passages of the Court House.

He recovered himself so quickly, however, that Mr. Lorry had doubts of his business eye. The arm of the golden giant in the hall was not more steady than he was, when he stopped under it to remark to them that he was not yet proof against slight surprises (if he ever would be), and that the rain had startled him.

Tea-time, and Miss Pross making tea, with another fit of the jerks upon her, and yet no Hundreds of people. Mr. Carton had lounged in, but he made only Two.

The night was so very sultry, that although they sat with doors and windows open, they were overpowered by heat. When the tea-table was done with, they all moved to one of the windows, and looked out into the heavy twilight. Lucie sat by her father; Darnay sat beside her; Carton leaned against a window. The curtains were long and white, and some of the thunder-gusts that whirled into the corner, caught them up to the ceiling, and waved them like spectral wings.

"The rain-drops are still falling, large, heavy, and few," said Doctor Manette. "It comes slowly."

"It comes surely," said Carton.

They spoke low, as people watching and waiting mostly do; as people in a dark room, watching and waiting for Lightning, always do.

There was a great hurry in the streets, of people speeding away to get shelter before the storm broke; the wonderful corner for echoes resounded with the echoes of footsteps coming and going, yet not a footstep was there.

"A multitude of people, and yet a solitude!" said Darnay, when they had listened for a while.

"Is it not impressive, Mr. Darnay?" asked Lucie. "Sometimes, I have sat here of an evening, until I have fancied—but even the shade of a foolish fancy makes me shudder to-night, when all is so black and solemn—"

"Let us shudder too. We may know what it is!"

"It will seem nothing to you. Such whims are only impressive as we originate them, I think; they are not to be communicated. I have sometimes sat alone here of an evening, listening, until I have made the echoes out to be the echoes of all the footsteps that are coming by—and by into our lives."

"There is a great crowd coming one day into our lives, if that be so," Sydney Carton struck in, in his moody way.

The footsteps were incessant, and the hurry of them became more and more rapid. The corner echoed and re-echoed with the tread of feet; some, as it seemed, under the windows; some, as it seemed, in the room; some coming, some going, some breaking off, some stopping altogether; all in the distant streets, and not one within sight.

"Are all these footsteps destined to come to all of us, Miss Manette, or are we to divide them among us?"

"I don't know, Mr. Darnay; I told you it

was a foolish fancy, but you asked for it. When I have yielded myself to it, I have been alone, and then I have imagined them the footsteps of the people who are to come into my life, and my father's."

"I take them into mine!" said Carton. "I ask no questions and make no stipulations. There is a great crowd bearing down upon us, Miss Manette, and I see them!—by the Lightning." He added the last words, after there had been a vivid flash which had shown him lounging in the window.

"And I hear them!" he added again, after a peal of thunder. "Here they come, fast, fierce, and furious!"

It was the rush and roar of rain that he typified, and it stopped him, for no voice could be heard in it. A memorable storm of thunder and lightning broke with that sweep of water, and there was not a moment's interval in crash, and fire, and rain, until after the moon rose at midnight.

The great bell of Saint Paul's was striking One in the cleared air, when Mr. Lorry, escorted by Jerry, high-booted and bearing a lantern, set forth on his return-passage to Clerkenwell. There were solitary patches of road on the way between Soho and Clerkenwell, and Mr. Lorry, mindful of footpads, always retained Jerry for this service: though it was usually performed a good two hours earlier.

"What a night it has been! Almost a night, Jerry," said Mr. Lorry, "to bring the dead out of their graves."

"I never see the night myself, master—nor yet I don't expect to it—what would do that," answered Jerry.

"Good night, Mr. Carton," said the man of business. "Good night, Mr. Darnay. Shall we ever see such a night again, together!"

Perhaps. Perhaps, see the great crowd of people with its rush and roar, bearing down upon them, too.

AUSTRIA.

THE empire which we harmoniously style Austria (falsely leading the world to suppose that the name is derived from something connected with the south wind, *Auster*), is called by its aboriginal savages and savagesses *Oestreich*, the Realm of the East, pronouncing the initial *oe* in a way scarcely practicable by British mouths, and giving the final *ch* a guttural sound which may be imitated approximatively when you are in the full enjoyment of a bad sore-throat. The French, who transmogrify all proper names, have come nearer than ourselves to the typical *Oestreich*; their version is *l'Autriche*, which is so far a happy one, because it leads itself aptly to a jingling description (in French) of the characters of the principal European nations. Thus: *l'Angleterre*, *Reine des Mers* (England, Queen of the Seas); *la France danse* (France dances); *la Prusse ruse* (Prussia is deep and cunning); and so on, till we

come to l'Autriche triche (Austria tricks or cheats).

All which are slanders, as false as the calumny that old men have grey beards, are weak in the hams, and have sometimes a plentiful lack of wit. Oestreich never tricks or cheats; no, never. If she steadily consults her own private interests, people have no right, on that account, to call her selfish; and if she chooses to stick to a peculiar line of policy, what necessary connexion is there between that and ingratitude? She carries out a much pleasanter system of increasing her territory than the vulgar mode of military conquest. Sheepskins can be turned to better account than to furnish drum-heads; a few strokes of the pen have greater force and more permanent effect than a very great many strokes of the drumstick. Treaties and contracts are the tools to work with; above all, marriage contracts. Hence the famous epigram:

Bella gerant alii; tu, felix Austria, nube;
Nam, quæ Mars aliis, dat tibi regna Venus.

Let others wage war; do thou, O fortunate Austria, marry;

For the kingdoms which Mars procures for others, will come to thee as the gifts of Venus.

But for the requirements of the pentameter verse, it should have been Hymen Lucrificus instead of Venus; the profits of wedlock have more to do with the matter than the arrows of love. The House of Hapsburg has always had an excusable fondness for heiresses, especially for damsels who happen to carry a crown in their porte-monnaie. The matrimonial system of aggression is stealthy and safe. For instance, there are a lot of desirable compact estates lying in ring-fences, each with a good family mansion on it, with wood and water, shooting and fishing, and a pleasant variety of manorial rights, fletson and jetson, and treasure-trove. These very eligible estates are comprised within a general boundary, which has been compared by auctioneers to the shape of a boot. All it wants is one good leg to fit it. Says Oestreich, "We will provide it provisionally with an assortment of leglings. You, Cousin Ludwig, will go and espouse the proprietress of estate Number Seven; your sister Adelheid will have no objection to take the heir of Number Four for better and for worse. Uncle Fritz, with a party of his promising boys, will look after the interests of the decrepid old gentleman, whom we won't allow any one to impose upon, except ourselves; and Aunt Rhadegunde will act as dry-nurse and housekeeper to the Babes in the Wood ticketed Number Five. Other numbers will be cared for, as occasion offers. Little by little we shall have obtained a footing over the whole of the area of the boot; and then (perhaps before that time) we betide the man who dares to cross our path!"

One of Lord Chesterfield's fundamental rules of conduct, was, that everything should be done "suaviter in modo, fortiter in re," with suavity of manner and with determined resolution; you

were to draw it mild, though you drew it by bucketfuls. The Austrians have long adopted the maxim, only the two divisions of the text on which the courtly peer preached so ably—and which he separated merely by a comma, or at most by a semicolon—have been torn far asunder by the Eastern Realms, and parted by a wide interval of time and space. The "suaviter in modo" is here, the "fortiter in re" is there. Between them lies all that tract of land which stretches from Vienna—call it rather, with the savages and "esses," Wien, pronouncing Veen—from Wien to Northern Italy; all the lapse of time from the date of Lord Cowley's most sweet reception to that of the pitching of the ultimatum into Piedmont.

The upper few hundred of the Oestreichers modestly style themselves "the cream of the cream;" this merely means that they have risen to the top. Their private as well as their official conduct is so exemplary that the mind cannot admit any allusion to scum. It was in the midst of this dullest cream, whipped up to frothiest syllabub, that our officious minister spent his Wienn nights and days, in a continuous succession of imperial, archducal, archduchessy, and countly, dinners, soirées, receptions, and conferences. Lookers on, studying the game, clearly saw that there were really too many dinners, too many archduchesses, and too much suaviter in modo. The non-official envoy put you in mind of a fly who has entered a confectioner's shop, but whose exit is quite impossible except by favour and caprice of the confectioner and his shopmaids. The Creamites had no interest in retaining their visitor as a permanent guest, and so they helped him to unglue his gauzy wings, to disengage his silk-hosed legs, and to buzz home again, delighted with the milk of Austrian kindness, and confident in assurances of high and distinguished consideration. His mission would have succeeded perfectly, had it not been previously settled that it should not succeed. If the cream of Wien dimpled a little beneath, not on, its oily surface when the diplomatic fly took his departure, it is to be supposed that the parting guest so agreeably sped, was out of earshot of the well-bred laugh.

The next scene, shifted considerably to the south-west, is made up entirely of "fortiter in re," coming it strong in a variety of ways. Here, instead of smooth speech and smiling countenances, there is a versatility of rapacity, of insolence, of destructiveness, displayed by white-uniformed actors who have experienced the scanty pay which is sung of in The Châlet. They have crossed the Ticino, and are come to trample down all before them, to crush, to blast, fortiter in re. Pity, humanity, respect for inoffensive individuals, for constituted authority, there is none. That would savour too much of suaviter in modo to suit this locality. Details of the white-uniform proceedings are to be taken with some reserve of course; but we all know what they were in Italy, without provocation and in time of peace, and on the stupidity and insolence of Austrian oppression then, we are justified in

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forming our belief of its stupidity and insolence now. The mayor of Broni is kept prisoner for days, and so ill treated that his life is in danger. The mayor of Barbianello and several deputy mayors of neighbouring towns, are arrested for not choosing to require the inhabitants to make embankments which shall prevent the bridge of La Stella (a bridge of escape for the Austrians) from being carried away by the floods of the Po. The refractory mayors simply lose their time and trouble; for the strong-minded Germans force even the women and children to set to work. An officer is ordered to reconnoitre the environs of Tortona, and to seize a score of Piedmontese peasants, making them march at the head of his column to screen his movements. The invaded district cannot repulse its enemies without first making martyrs of its own friends and countrymen. When the war is over, these ingenious invaders (it is said) intend to try their hands at the slave-trade, where there is every prospect of their making large fortunes.

It is not merely what war does when it has begun; it is what it does before it can begin, which renders it so horrible. It will take from ten to fifty years to repair the injuries which the Croats have committed in the mere act of making themselves at home and bivouacking comfortably in the country favoured by their visit. When we say Croats, only one, and perhaps the most hated, element of the Austrian legions is mentioned. The very multitude of the annexed provinces reduces their army to an heterogeneous crowd who do not understand each other's tongue. They are the peoples, nations, and languages of Nebuchadnezzar, commanded to fall down altogether, and worship the golden image of despotism set up before them. A Hungarian prisoner, after much interpretation, was made to comprehend that Oestreich had other foes besides the Sardes to contend with. In his amazement, he replied that he did not know that; if he had known it, he would not have come to fight the French; and he believed that not one of his countrymen would have come either. Even the Croats begin to prefer their own side of the water, and there is some talk of the probability of their walking quietly home without asking leave. But, olive and mulberry-trees cut down for firewood, vines grubbed up because they impede transit, require many springs and many summers to regain productive growth. To render resistance to the intruders possible, the country insulted must first be reduced to a desert. Alessandria, as far as the eye can reach, is surrounded with trees that have been felled to within one or two feet of the ground, and whose lopped branches are scattered in disorder over the surface of the trodden-down soil. The almond is no more respected than the oak, the olive than the elm. Wood and orchard, timber-tree and fruit-tree, alike fall victims to the patriotic axe, which must make a clearance to allow self-defensive bullets to reach the enemy. The trim villa, the happy country-house, is stoically swept away if it can afford

any screen to the emissaries of "fortiter in re." By the employment of other means of self-preservation a rich province has become a swampy lake. As the Russians drove out invaders by a sacrificial fire, so the Piedmontese have met their enemies with voluntary inundations. The Austrians caught the brother of a sluice-keeper, and sent word to him who held the keys of the flood, "Shut your water-gates, or your brother is a dead man instantly!" The answer came, in the flush of a double tide. Sluices and dikes are thrown up and broken; leagues and leagues of fertile land are under water. The losses are incalculable; but the march of Fortiter-in-re is paralysed. To confirm the cheek, Piedmont deprives herself of more than field or farm, of vineyard or olive-grove. The spring flowers of humanity, which cannot be renewed on earth, are sacrificed together with blossoms which years will replace. Whole companies of smooth-faced unmounted lads are marched to the slaughter or the sufferings of disease which must soon lay them low in death. They maintain outwardly a martial bearing; but they hastily brush the tears from their eyes as the eddying crowd sweeps their parents and friends from their sight. Mark that poor old woman, whom her son the soldier supports on his arm. At every step, she stops, gazes on him, and weeps. He comforts her, as well as he can. But the trumpet sounds; the battalion is drawn up beside the railway train. The old woman clasps her son in her arms with a shudder which runs through her frame. He tears himself away, and the wretched mother drops sobbing into a corner. The bystanders are obliged to turn their heads aside.

Now comes a company of artillery. Hats are in the air, and hearty shouts make the station-roofs resound. "Viva! viva!" A side group consists of a man grasping the hand of his son. They look at each other without uttering a word. At the signal for starting, their hands drop asunder. The one is borne away, pale and silent; the other gazes after him till he is out of sight, motionless; the quivering of his lower jaw alone betrays the bitterness of the moment. He slowly retires, to find a desolate home. Fortiter-in-re makes even the thoughtless think. A monk passes, letting the beads of his rosary deliberately pass between his fingers. There is a suppressed titter; but a clown rises and makes the military salute, and the monk gives his benediction. There is no more laughing, but a respectful bowing of heads. Death is too near, to allow a priestly blessing to be irreverently treated.

"Fortiter in re" is an excellent maxim; still, the poet propounds another: "Est modus in rebus." There is reason in roasting of eggs. That reason the Austrians have yet to find. There is chivalrous war, and there is savage brigandage. They prefer the brigandage, as the easier and the more profitable alternative. But, as civilised Europe will refuse to credit the scenes enacted by the agents of the Ultimatum, the Piedmontese

government is collecting documents to illustrate the behaviour of the invading army. Europe will be astonished when she reads; the robberies, the outrages, the exactions, the wanton village, the greed, and the cruel injustice of these freebooters have no parallel in her modern history. The country invaded is, in their opinion, a country to be sacked and bled to death. The Austrian corporals compel to labour, with blows of the stick, the unhappy peasants whom they tear from their homes; if the peasants make their escape, the soldiers take the women and children. All the hospitals and other charitable establishments are despoiled of their bedding and linen; any funds they may possess, which are the property of the poor, are seized as a matter of course. The soldiers are especially greedy after linen, cloth, and leather. All the sheets they can lay hands on, are converted into shirts. One small market-town was ordered to supply a thousand pieces of linen per day for six days. At the end of the second day, after all that could be found had been got together, there was no more left. The Croat commandant sent for the syndic, handsomely gave him, as a great favour, a written pass, and told him that at Pavia or Milan he would find all the linen that his fellow townsmen might want, to replace that which had been stolen from them—by paying for it. Several other illustrations of the lawless spirit of the invaders are already passing current with the stamp of authenticity plainly marked upon them.

The municipality of Vigevano have to construct, at their own expense, a wooden bridge over the Ticino, which will cost twelve thousand pounds. More than two thousand workmen labour at the task, which, nevertheless, does not progress fast enough for the enemy's liking. They therefore notify to the persons employed by the town that if they do not set on a larger number of labourers, they (the Oestreichers) will force the gentry of the neighbourhood to work at the bridge with their own hands.—At Vercelli, General Benedek (a misprint for Turpin) imposed a contribution of twenty thousand pounds. The Banker Levi obtained an audience of the brigand chief, and told him that if he were not allowed to go to Milan, Vercelli could never raise so large a sum. They gave him a passport, and he went to Milan and obtained the cash from Banker Mylins.—At Voghera, everything is ravaged. The fields and meadows are trodden underfoot and destroyed; the vines and mulberry-trees are rooted up. All communication is intercepted. People dare not even attempt to escape, for fear of having a bullet sent to fetch them back.—At Tortona, a mounted hussar rode up to a watchmaker's shop. Politely clapping a pistol to the breast of the lady of the house, he requested she would have the goodness to cause a gold watch to be handed over to him.—The Archbishop of Vercelli went to meet the enemy, hoping to soften them by the voice of religion and charity. As soon as the Austrian commandant perceived him, he stretched out his arms in token of respect.

There appeared grounds for hope. But, as soon as the invaders entered the town they began their requisitions by seizing the archbishop's horses.—When an Austrian soldier thinks fit to purchase any article, he insists on paying for it with bits of paper, which are of equal value with French assignats. The seller, rather than receive such rubbish, prefers to make the hero a present of his wares. But, the noble warrior urges the legal (forced) currency of his notes and his fragments of notes, and at the same time exacts a considerable amount of cash in the shape of change. He thus contrives to buy whatever takes his fancy, and comes out of the shop a richer man, in coin, than when he entered it.—In the neighbourhood of Novara, an Austrian subaltern went to a small farmer's house, offering to sell him a handsome cow for eighty francs. The farmer thought himself highly fortunate, and paid the money down. A few minutes afterwards, a party of soldiers came and carried off the newly purchased cow. Perhaps the farmer was rightly served, as he must have known the cow was stolen.—Another farmer, who had a pretty wife, was in great consternation at receiving a second visit from one and the same Austrian acquaintance. "Don't be alarmed," said the magnanimous trooper, "it isn't your wife I want. I am only come for your geese and your capons."—If it were never worse than that! The young wife of a deputy well known at Turin is dead, in consequence of the indescribable treatment which she received from a band of these barbarians. The officers who command such troops expect to be considered and addressed as gentlemen! There is no resistance on the part of the inhabitants, nor the excitement of victory to excuse such horrors, which are simply the preliminaries before a blow is struck. When the blow is stricken, deeds will be done which the human mind can scarcely imagine. Hatred of the Austrian has become an hereditary passion in the Lombardo-Venetian breast. There are nearly forty years of unceasing and accumulated insult and spoliation to avenge. A grey-haired landed proprietor, whose domain is close to Vigevano, and who was fortunately absent from home at the moment of the invasion, said, "I have neither cattle in my stables, nor corn in my barns, nor trees on my land. All that is left me is my wife, my children, and—the soil." And then he added, "I should not complain if I were sure that this was the last time."

Statements have been, and will continue to be, put forth, to prove that savage brigands are the mildest and the most considerate of men. But, also, there are reports so excessively inconsistent and improbable, that all the affidavits in the world cannot obtain credence for them. Moreover, it is difficult for war and truth to travel far in company together. We must often judge by comparison, and deduce, from what is done *there*, what is likely to be perpetrated *here*. An invaded country cannot expect much forbearance, when we know that at Milan—in what is called the Austrian dominions, where the people are

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subjects, not enemies—a recent proclamation allows the soldiers to shoot on the spot whoever is guilty of any insult towards them. If they beat you, and you raise your arm, or your voice, it is an offence against the military, to be wiped out only by powder and ball.

A NEW SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY.

IN FIVE PARTS.

PART II.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

THE pretty Frenchwoman, who sat in the corner of the carriage opposite (diagonally) to mine in the train which bore me from Boulogne to Paris, was quite a pleasant object to have before one, and afforded me much food for reflection and thought. She was not alone, but was accompanied by a lady who sat next her, and who was something the elder of the two.

The pretty Frenchwoman, who was dressed in half-mourning, and who I took into my head was a young widow, had a book in her lap to read, and a dog in her lap to play with, and between them and the before-mentioned friend she divided her attention—but not impartially.

The poor book! The poor author! I believe I am not in the least exaggerating when I say that two minutes at a time was about as much as this lively lady could find in her heart to bestow upon the volume under perusal. At the expiration of that time the dog had to be disturbed from his snug position in the lady's lap, and was lifted up half asleep, and very cross, to be kissed. This done, there would follow a little more reading, then there was a little confidential talk with the friend, then the dog again; this time he was to have his eyes wiped with the lady's laced pocket-handkerchief. Then the book again, but not for long. The dog has to be kissed again, but suddenly, and as if it was an imperious necessity of the lady's nature, and one which had never occurred to her before to gratify. Or the nasty little whining beast (how I hated it) had to be fed with bits of sugar and biscuit, or he had to be talked to, and many things whispered in his ear in confidence, or to be newly settled and snoozled in among the warm folds of the French lady's shawl. She could look across at me at such times (would this French lady) with an aggravating expression which said very plainly, "Yes, you wouldn't dislike to be treated like this yourself, would you? and you don't like to see all this affection bestowed upon a dog, do you? but you're afraid to say so." The book, then, served but to fill up the gaps between these attentions to the dog, and the confidence to the friend, and certain perpetual puttings to rights of the lady's own costume, in every one of which readjustments a small and distracting boot was by some strange accident continually appearing, and then being covered up again, lest it should get too common.

It is not a flattering or pleasant thing to an author to watch the proceedings of a lady who is engaged in the perusal of his works. She is

at such times ever ready and willing to be interrupted, as in the case before us. I recollect, on one occasion, asking a young lady of my acquaintance the casual question whether she had been reading much lately. "Oh yes, a great deal," was her answer. So, common-places being the order of the day, my next inquiry was, what the works were which had been occupying her attention. "I really don't know," she said.

Alas, alas, are these dear and clever creatures ever so absorbed in the work with which they are engaged as to omit to ask what the station is every time the train stops, or to fail to examine (and perhaps to disapprove) from top to bottom the dress of every lady who gets into the carriage? I love and admire you, dear ladies, with all my heart, but I should like to see you read my chapter (it is but a short one) straight through, and leave the dog alone till it is done.

Alone in Paris—alone, in the busy streets—alone in the full cafés—alone, in the crowded theatres. This was what I wanted, was it? Is it altogether good now I have got it?

Is it altogether good when some absurd incident occurs, when something beautiful, or something hateful, is brought before one's attention, to have no one to whom to remark these things, no one to share one's sentiments of admiration or of disapproval?

When, for instance, at that excellent restaurant, the Café Cagmag, I noted that not only did little children, brought there by their parents, and sitting up with napkins pinned about their necks by the paternal hand—for your Frenchman is a much more domestic person than he is generally believed to be—when I noted that not only did these infants of tender years make choice of highly seasoned dishes, and clamour loudly for stimulating sauces, but that even a cat, which in my solitude I was glad to make friends with, did, upon my offering it a portion of a cutlet dressed "au naturel," decline to eat of it, and upon a prodigiously disguised friecandeau being subsequently placed before me did eagerly accept and ravenously devour a piece of this more savoury compound,—when this occurred, was it a pleasant thing to have no friend at hand with whom to enjoy so national and characteristic an incident?

When in low spirits—when, through some change in the barometer—for such things affect us—or through some derangement of the mind's healthiness—does not the mind catch its colds, and have its attacks of sickness, as the body has?—through some exaggerated view of future difficulties—some too bitter regret for past mistakes—when from these, or some other cause, connected with the ever-changing, ever-shifting tide of human feeling, the spirits give way, and sadness settles down with a leaden weight upon the soul, at such times—is it good to be alone?

Is it good for a man to be so lonely in the crowd that he longs to ally himself with strangers, and yearns for admission into families of whom he knows nothing, except that they

have kindly pleasant looks, and are many—while he is one?

Who knows as well as I do the interest that a man thus utterly alone will take in persons unknown to him, and how he will occupy himself with their affairs—the pleasure it will give him to exchange a word or two with the old lady who keeps the café, and to get a hearty “Good night” from her when he takes his leave? It requires some experience of solitude to enable any one to understand how precious such small interchanges of common-place remarks may be to one who has had nobody to speak to all the day, and for many days together. It requires some knowledge of sorrow and depression to reveal how inexpressibly dear a kindly uttered “Good night” may be to one who hopes with all his soul that that wish, spoken with little thought of what it means, may be fulfilled.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

It was only a twopenny affair when all’s told, but there was in the expression of the dog’s face as he looked back at his master, at every step he took, something which touched me nearly; so nearly, that I turned round to watch these two—the blind man and his dog—after they had passed me, and continued to watch them, too, long enough to get (for it was in a busy street) sadly buffeted and knocked about by the passers-by.

It was to a snuff-shop door that the dog—looking back, as I have said, at every step to see how the old man got on—it was straight to a snuff-shop door that he led him. Here the old man began to feel for the handle of the lock, asking advice gravely upon the subject from the dog, whose name, it seemed, was Azor.

Azor was one of those dogs whose tawny fur is soft and thick, whose ears are sharp and pointed, and whose eyes are black and bright and watchful; in short, if there could be such a thing in creation as a fox of an amiable character, ignorant of the world and its wiles, easily taken in, and with his tail curled up upon his back, it would be such an animal that Azor would most strongly have resembled. He had brought his master to the threshold, but could do no more for him; so he stood, watching with ears erect and glistening eyes, the issue of the blind man’s search.

It was so far successful that he was getting very near the object of it, and Azor was brightening up prodigiously, when suddenly a rough and blue-bloused savage, flinging the door open from within, and plunging heavily out into the street, failed but by a little to upset the blind man’s balance, and kicked Azor into the gutter.

Even then, the dog’s first thought on recovering his legs was for the blind beggar, and it was with a piteous expression of interest that he looked up at him to see how he fared.

“And so, poor beast,” I said, muttering the words aloud, as is the wont of those who are much alone—“and so, this is the life which thou dost bear so kindly. What an existence is thine, Azor,” I continued; “why, thou art tied to that

blind man’s hand for life. Thou art cut off from the very habits of a dog. No running hither and thither—no snuffing and smelling, and running back to snuff and smell again—for thee. No passing interchange of thought with others of thy kind. From these things thou art forever separated, and yet these things are very precious to thee. Thou dost scarce belong, Azor, to thine own species at all, and art transplanted to be an associate of ours. Thou art tied to humanity by that string, and to humanity in its most impaired and broken state. Thy master is not only blind, but very old and weak, infirm and poor, and those two sous which he is laying out for snuff (for by this time the pair had got into the shop, and the beggar was waiting to be served), those two sous are more than he can spare by five centimes at least. Thou belongest, Azor, to a nation that loves a holiday, and to which the attractions of pleasure are not unknown; as a French dog, it cannot be but thou must want thy ‘jours de fête,’ thine opportunities of play, some chance at times to have a frisk. Yet I see no holiday, no relaxation, no sports canine for thee. And still that dear old face of thine, Azor, is a happy, cheerful countenance, and an innocent, as ever looked out from collar. Very different from that old rascal of a poodle, who sits beside that still greater old rascal, his master, upon the steps of St. Roch, and which poodle, habited in a great coat, and with one eye closed, is a favourite study with me of an afternoon. Very different from him art thou, Azor, and good and true and patient is thy face, and rough and hard thy lot.”

And what am I, who chafe and fret when kept but for a day from what I want? Am I not so impatient and ungentle when crossed in my desires, or deprived by some accident for half a dozen hours of that liberty, which thou, Azor, canst never know—am I not so cross-grained at such times that I may take a lesson from a dog, and think of thee, when next the fit comes on?

It was to pay for his snuff (but a twopenny matter as I have said above) that I ran back after the old blind beggar, whom Azor was now pulling eagerly away from the tobacconist’s shop, the door of which having been left ajar, the dog had opened for him with his nose.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

It was on Tuesday, November the 30th, 1858, that I took it into my head that I would get out into the country round about Paris. I made two expeditions, both on foot—both in the same direction. I could not for the life of me persuade myself to turn my steps in any other. Belleville! I must go to Belleville. I will go to no place which does not consist with passing through Belleville. Come what come may, I must see Belleville first. Everything else may take its chance.

On the day I have mentioned, then, and at two o’clock P.M., grasping my trusty umbrella—may I introduce here an address to my umbrella? No, says a stern public, hang your umbrella!

grasping my umbrella, flinging around me (as novelists put it) a light paletot, I make my start. I had had a nasty morning of it. My work had gone but indifferently, and I had closed my desk with the remark (talking to myself as those do who have no one else to speak to)—“If people knew how much of a man’s life and health, of mind and body, he puts into the page he writes, would they treat it, I wonder, with more tenderness, and criticise less freely?” “Not they,” was my answer, for I like to be just, and argue with myself, contemptuously enough, as though that other self wanted (and so he does sometimes) to mislead me—“not they,” I said; “what have they to do, Horatio, with aught but the page before them? What have they to do with thy sleepless nights—with thine uneasy doze—haunted by the images that have filled thine imagination in the day? What to them is the history of thy sorrows—thy disappointments—thine apprehensions, thy life’s follies, thy broken health?” It is not long ago that I met, slouching along a London street, one of the world’s favourite purveyors of amusement—one who has given delight to thousands in his time. But what a wreck! How old before his time! The clothes that used to cleave so tightly to his full and prosperous form, now drop in wrinkles round a shrivelled, weak old man, who shrinks along with uncouth gait, the ghost—the blank remains of what was once—a genius!

For all these things, then, the public cares not. And why should it? Do we work from philanthropic motives, or goaded on by want—want of bread or want of luxuries, as the case may be—and by a strong ambition? If the page is a good one, I have earned my money; but if not, the reader says, and says rightly, “The man is dull—away with him!”

It was after writing, then, an unsatisfactory page—not of this work, I have burnt all the unsatisfactory pages of this—but of my great Essay on Men and Things, that I started as I have described—the chest expanded, the head thrown back, the moustache, which dates from Folkestone, pushing vigorously—and my course shaped—keeping about two points off the wind—it was blowing hard that day—for Belleville. [One word in parenthesis. I will most certainly take the very next opportunity I can get to make some remarks upon moustaches, their growth and habits, with directions as to their culture.]

My course shaped for Belleville. Is the reader trembling in dread anticipation of a description? Does he see before him a vista of pages about quaint old houses, curious costumes? Does he quail before a prospective enumeration of the many points of contrast between the French and English nations as exhibited in a suburb? I hasten to reassure him. Among the first words of this chronicle was a pledge that from these things he should enjoy a cheerful immaturity. I guarantee him, too, against scraps of dialogue in the French tongue. So courage, and let us advance. I have a golden rule in

writing, to which I steadfastly adhere—to do as I would be done by—to write as I would be written for.

I should like, then, if I were reading instead of writing, to be told of a man who, quitting the Boulevard at its most joyous moment (all alone), exchanges its asphalt for the mud of the Faubourg du Temple, pursuing its long and narrow street to the utmost limits to which it reaches. ’Tis a strange thing to do. What can he find attractive in a Parisian suburb? But let us mark him as he walks along. Why does he stop before that old hotel? It is a barren prospect surely. What is there to look at? A court-yard surrounded on three sides by the house—the walls of old and shabby stone—the roof both high and steep, with many windows in its sloping sides. This is all. There is no sign of life about the place. What does he see to gaze at? What is there in that grim old house that keeps him so long before it? It must be that in some nook or corner of his brain there are associations which the sight of the house appeals to. It must be that he has conjured up some pictures of the past which hold him there entranced. Perhaps it is a vision of French life under the old régime of which he has got a glimpse. That house, now a boarding-school for girls, must once have been lived in by some old and noble family, and it is haply with them that the lonely man is allying himself in thought. Is it so? Is he thinking of that pale old marquis, the head of the family, with powdered head, with three-cornered hat, with decreasing calf, and with the sword—that most perfect finish of a gentleman’s costume—still hanging by his side? Has our wanderer got this figure before him, the head of a family that looks up to him as to a king, or is it the comely lady whom the old man treats with such respectful politeness, and with whom he has such stately games at cards? Is our wayfarer thinking of this pair—in whom of a surety no excess of familiarity has bred contempt—or of their children; of the sons dismissed, as soon as they could boast a pigtail, to serve their sovereign in the army; of the daughters, well governed maidens, brought up in the chaste serenity and the chill seclusion of a convent’s walls? Is this family—it is a pleasant theme for thought—is this family, with its band of old retainers, who have passed their lives in its service, and who are strangers to a modern desire to “better themselves,” is this household present to the thoughts of him whom we are accompanying in his solitary ramble? If so, why that troubled sigh as he turns away? Is it that the picture he has conjured up reminds him that he himself had once a hope, a prospect; that once the thought of heading such a house himself was no irrational desire, no wild ambition; that the chance has gone, that he has missed the tide, that the structure he had built in youth has crumbled into dust? Or is it that he thinks of the use to which the house is now devoted, and remembering that as a school it must be full of beings whose life is all before them, he thinks of

the priceless gift of youth which is theirs, and sighs as he remembers that his own is gone?

Gone with its strength of hope—gone with its belief in perfect happiness ever at hand but never coming, quite—gone with its power of enjoyment—gone with its sweet delusions—gone with its sanguine trust.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

LET us follow our pedestrian as he rambles on. The appetite of the melancholy Jacques himself would have been appeased and satiated by the gloom of a French suburb in general, and by that of the main street of Belleville in particular; yet it seems scarcely enough for him whose footsteps we are at present following, for he turns aside into a back lane, which ends in the garlands of a cemetery. Late on a damp and wintry afternoon he enters it, and wanders among its paths alone. Alone? Not quite. A cap upon the head of one deep down in a grave which he is digging appears now and then above the level of the ground, as he throws up a shovelful of earth.

Is there no one else? Yes, far off in a path among the graves a woman, dressed in mourning, has stood motionless as a statue ever since our wanderer entered the cemetery. She is standing there still when he leaves it; and yet he leaves it in no hurry; there is much there to attract him. The place itself is attractive, with its garden-like appearance—more flowers to be seen than graves. What singular allegiance to the dead appears too in these people whom we in England call "our lively neighbours;" an allegiance shown by garlands two days old placed on graves whose occupants, the inscription tells us, were lain there a dozen years ago. In one waste place, too, heaps of these chaplets were thrown, when blackened and decayed with age. The decay of these tributes to decay was a curious thing to observe. Little chapels, too, were there built by "our lively neighbours" over the bodies of some among the dead; little chapels, but six or seven feet long, which yet contain an altar covered with flowers, and a prie-Dieu chair besides. What—a chair? Is it possible that it is ever used? Is it possible that there are those among "our lively neighbours" who steal away from the noise and bustle of the town, who seek this lonely place, and, entering the chapel, beneath which lies the body which they have loved, will sit and think awhile about the dead, and lift a prayer—as their creed allows—for him who has passed away.

Such things may be. It is a pleasant thought, at any rate; for surely of all the ingredients in the horror which death inspires, there is not one that has a larger share to make it terrible than the bitter thought that we are forgotten. Oh, that exile of the body which we have loved! Think of it in the bitter nights when the window is lashed by driving rains—think then that the form you loved, the face you have kissed, the hands you have held, haply the grey hairs you have revered, are there in that sodden trench. They are there—that very face—those

very hands—your friend—your father—your wife—your little child. Their bodies are not removed out of the world—they are there—lying this bitter night in the clay. Think of this sometimes—not repiningly, not in hatred at what must be, and what is right; think of it, not rebelliously, not in despair, but think of it—it is the dead man's right; and go, once, now and then, and stand beside his grave. You shall not come away the worse.

It may be that a long and solitary walk on a winter's afternoon, through the streets of a Parisian suburb, and an hour spent among the garlands of a French cemetery, may be a good way of getting the mind into a condition in which it is profoundly touched by many small incidents which would at other times go for little or nothing, and in which it takes a powerful interest in many things which it would pass by unnoticed when in a stouter and more vigorous mood.

It may be (and I incline to the opinion myself) that this susceptibility to emotion, this ready sympathy that costs us nothing, is very little worth, and that the man whose heart is easily penetrated by the sorrows of a blind man's dog is hard of access to a poor relation. It may be that such sensibility is but an enervating mockery of real feeling—a worthless sham upon the earth. It may be that the man who gives a five-franc piece without inquiry, and perhaps for the sake of a sensation, has debts at home, which should in justice have closed his purse's mouth. Alas! we know of one who, touched to the quick by the sight of a dead jackass on the road, could yet allow the mother that bore him to want in her old age.

It may be, then, that the function of the sentimental is hard to determine, and that it is not easy to know whether upon the world's stage it has a place at all—whether it is sterling coin or counterfeit dross, the lawful property of the dunghill.

Leaving this question an open one, let me go on to say that it was in returning from the walk which has just been described that my attention was caught by a little crowd of children, encompassing, and eagerly pressing around, some grown-up person who stood in the midst of them. On getting nearer to the group, I found that this commotion was caused simply by the breaking-up for the day of a girls' school of poor children, and that it was the schoolmistress, a *sœur de charité*, who for some reason had accompanied the little things into the street, who was thus hemmed in and surrounded by these children of all conceivable ages and of every possible size, to the number of about thirty.

But that which pleased me most was, that the *sœur de charité* had to stoop down and kiss every one of the thirty girls before they could be got to leave her. How eager, too, they were—those behind pressing upon the foremost ones in their desire to obtain the kiss with which this kind and gentle lady dismissed them for the night.

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It was a pleasant sight enough, and one that sent me back into the streets of Paris in happier cue.

But still alone.

HALF THE YEAR ROUND.

JANUARY.

SLOW-PACED and solemn, through the drifting snow,
With heart uplifted comes the hopeful year,
Breathing like voice of waves in ebb and flow,
To mourners all, O! be ye of good cheer!
Look back but for a moment to the past—
That is in God's own keeping, yours no more;—
The present days that flee as shadows fast,
Should leave no loiterers weeping on the shore.
Dim through the sky, shifting the subtle sand,
Uncertain the loud wind and long the way,
Angels keep watch and ward on either hand,
Gleams fall from Heaven on the darkest day.

Be of good courage! Cease that faithless moan,
Forsaken ye are not when most alone.

FEBRUARY.

HALF shrouded in a veil of pallid mist,
Half smiling in wan sunshine on the hills,
The fruitful life high swelling in her breast,
As swells the ripple in the flooded rills.
Lustres of primrose glistening through the grey,
First songs low twittered in the leafless wood,
A tender beam in the blue eye of day,
A certain forecast of all coming good.
Like the brave hopes that early youth conceives,
In the rich soil of pure and happy hearts;
Hopes that will put forth green and vigorous leaves,
Buds, blooms, and fruitage, ere the year departs.

Welcome thy wavering brightness for their sake,
Strengthened to bear the storm when winds awake.

MARCH.

FOLD thy robes close, the loud-voiced blusterer sweeps
Over the whitened surges, mad with rage,
Like cruel tyrant, heedless of who weeps,
So he his desperate battle may but wage!
Pray for all souls out on the storm-racked sea,
That the great Pilot bring them safely home!—
Pray for all souls who now their doom must dree,
That He will take them where no storms can come!
Pale women watching on the beacon-hill,
For fathers, husbands, sons, who'll sail no more,
Let your tears cease, your mourning hearts be still,
Safe landed are they on the heavenly shore;

Quiet in haven where ye fain would be,
Anchored in peace for all eternity!

APRIL.

WELCOME, O sweet caprice of smiles and tears!
Spoil'd darling, with the fickle, flashing eyes,
Trembling 'twixt joy and foolish happy fears,
Now laughing loud, now shivering through with sighs.
Pleasant art thou, young sister of the Spring,
Light dancing o'er the golden frosted moss;
To thy fresh notes the merry echoes ring,
While larches shake their emerald tassels loose.
Soft Aphrodite waits with myrtle crown
To grace thee as the First Love of the World,
To soothe thy sigh, beguile thy fretted frown,
And kiss away thy anger, rain-empearled.
Shine out, then, tenderly, bewitching elf,
Earth hath no fairer child than thy fair self!

MAY.

LOVE in her eyes, sweet promise on her lips,
Blossomed abundance in her tender arms,
Bird music heralding her sunlit steps,
Winds hushed and mute in reverence of her charms.

Maid veiled in tresses flecked with gems of dew,
White lily crowned and clad in 'broidered green,
Smiling till hoar and eld their youth renew,
And vest themselves in robes of verdant sheen.
Where fall her dainty feet meek daisies blow,
Lifting their fire-touched lips to court a kiss;
Heart beats to heart and soft cheeks warmly glow,
With budding hopes of love and joy and bliss.
Fern banners wave, and harebells welcome ring,
As trips across the meads the Bride of Spring.

JUNE.

QUEEN of the fairies, laughing-browed Rose Queen!
Sunny enchantress, dimpled, warm, and fair!
Sweet witch, on whom young maidens shyly lean,
Wreathing star pansies in thy golden hair—
Pansies for thoughts lips dare not speak aloud,
But mystically whisper in a flower;
While stands the shadowy Future, pale and bowed,
Drawing the emblem-lots that shall them dower:
Nightshade to one, to one a red, red bloom,
Fresh gathered with the dew in its warm heart,
Wild woodbine, briar, grey moss from a tomb,
Balm-flowers, sweet-balsam, stinging-nettle smart—
Prophetic oracles that glad and grieve,
Given in Elfin Court Midsummer eve.

MY ADVISERS.

THEIR name is legion. They are of all ages and conditions. Muffin, the crossing-sweeper at the top of our street (for the use of whom I pay a weekly rental of one penny, falling due on Mondays), is of the number. Totty, my youngest daughter, rising seven, is another. Muffin advised me to go, or permit him to go, back for my umbrella, this very morning, though it was not raining, or in the least degree likely to rain. His words were: "Bad sort of morning for a delicate gen'l'm'n like you to be out in, sir! Better go back for your rumbrellar, sir. Or I'll run if you like: my legs is stronger than yourn is, sir."

Insult! My legs are quite strong enough to kick Muffin the whole length of his crossing, as I most assuredly will do if he should venture upon a repetition of his impudent advice. Nor am I at all delicate. But, somehow or other, it seems a provision of the universal destinies that every man, woman, and child should consider him, her, or itself privileged to pity, patronise, and, especially—to advise me.

Why?

That is precisely what I want to know.

Wherein is Muffin, the crossing-sweeper, my superior? Is he a doctor, or a meteorologist, or a man of genius indefinitely (hardly the latter, I should think, or the crossing would be vacant), that he should presume to advise me upon the weather, and, what is far more intolerable, upon my own personal health? It looks impertinent on the face of it, considering that I have received what is called a liberal education, and have at heart intellect enough to support myself in the social scale at a considerable elevation above the rank of a crossing-sweeper. But how can I blame Muffin when I find my aged maternal grandmother—who can hardly spell, and who speaks of her place of abode as "Camber-vell"—still so confident in her own powers of

argument, and in the plasticity of my nature, as to believe that she will yet, one day, induce me to give up the study of profane literature, and embrace a saving faith in the tenets of Warm Water Baptism (Peckham Branch—New Connexion), of which comparatively obscure religious persuasion the old lady is an active supporter?

Muffin, indeed! Why, the before-mentioned Totty, barely six-and-three-quarters, has been advising me for the last fortnight to shave off my whiskers! Surely, I am as good a judge of manly beauty as Totty. And, for that matter, I should think I know as well what is necessary for the conduct of a work of fiction as my brother-in-law John Slogginson, who, though twenty-eight years of age, has not yet succeeded in acquiring the rudiments of any lucrative profession, and who, but for a little really well-grounded information on the subject of rats and terriers, with some practical knowledge of the noble art of self-defence, might be pronounced a monumental prodigy of ignorance in general. Yet John is at me fiercely day after day, with truculent counsel to alter the contemplated catastrophe of a romance I am writing in the Hair-on-End Magazine; and if I adhere to my original design, which I still think a good one, I am by no means sure that he will not punish my disobedience with a thrashing. I doubt if John ever read a work of fiction in his life till he took mine under his patronage for the special discomfiture of its author. I am sure he would not venture to express an opinion on the works of any other living writer. But he edits me, cruelly and remorselessly. He commands alterations as if I were his tailor, and my story his coat. And he employs no false delicacy in conveying his objections. His manner of criticism is in this wise: "I tell you what, Joe, if you don't alter that precious slow chapter, you are a bigger fool even than I took you for;" or, "You don't mean to let this scene stand as it is, do you? You can please yourself, of course, but if you want my candid opinion" (which I never did in my life), "it's downright rot. And there you have it."

Mr. Slogginson advises me not merely on my literary achievements, but also on my private affairs—pecuniary, sartorial, and hygienic. Mr. S. has been chronically insolvent since I had the honour of forming his alliance, but he is very hard on me indeed when I myself get a little behindhand with the world. He told me, savagely, the other day, that if he ever heard of me putting my name to another bill (I have backed John's own not easily negotiable paper before now), he would feel himself tempted to administer to me the severe moral lesson of knocking my head against the wall; after which he borrowed half-a-crown, and went out to spend the evening. John is not what you would call a good dresser, his washerwoman may be said to enjoy something very like a sinecure; but he insists rigorously that I shall be uniformly neat and unobtrusive in my attire. I started a wide-awake of rather eccentric pattern last summer. John imme-

diately sequestered that covering, remarking that I should not make a public exhibition of myself while it was in his power to prevent it. John wears the hat to this day! I met him at a party last Christmas, and very well he looked indeed in my best white waistcoat and penultimate dress trousers. I was rather satisfied with my own personal appearance too, having taken especial pains with the tie of my cravat. I had scarcely entered the room, when John passed me, exclaiming, in an angry, authoritative whisper, backed by a cruel frown, "Do go home and take that thing off. Are you mad? The people are staring at you." I attempted a beard once, on the occasion of a severe sore-throat; but, this was a liberty John could not and would not put up with. I shaved, and was forgiven.

Very particular about my health, too, is John Slogginson. He has a philosophic disregard for his own; in fact, I have had to nurse him through two attacks of delirium tremens. He will not let me eat anything I like. If he finds me rather bilious, and complaining, any morning, he growls, in urbane tones, "Ugh! smoking again, I suppose? If you *will* kill yourself I can't help it." After which he borrows my pen-knife to cut up his Cavendish. If I take him out to a dinner party (an error I have more than once been advised into committing), he ruthlessly puts me in a cab, just as the claret and conversation are beginning to circulate, and returns to finish the evening. I have found it no isolated experience to receive feverish tidings from him the next morning, dated from a remote and inaccessible station-house.

I am a married man, or I should not be blessed with a brother-in-law. This fact acknowledged, it will be perhaps superfluous to state, after what I have already stated of myself, that my wife favours me with frequent and liberal supplies of the commodity in question. Mrs. Drilling may, in fact, be pronounced the *Première* or *Prime* Ministress of my Majesty's Council of Advisers. The advice is uniformly good, but difficult of adoption. I am not quite sure that she ever actually advised me to be six feet high (I stand five feet ten in my stockings), or to alter my natural saturnine complexion to a florid and sanguine tint; but her advice is usually of that practicable character. She is for ever advising me to write a work, that shall secure for me such emolument and consideration as have been awarded to the writings of Mr. Phœbus O'Polough, the eminent Hibernian novelist; or to dash off a five-act play, something in the style of the eminently successful dramatist, Sir Hugh Rippidies. If I could only just bring my mind to do this, she very sensibly urges—at the same time emulating the domestic regularity of our friend Mr. Thurtell Dove, combining therewith the business aptitude of our thriving City acquaintance Mr. Baring Bull—we should be so happy! It is capital advice, undoubtedly.

I have still, I am happy to say, an affectionate mother. She is marvellously fond of, and I am afraid exorbitantly proud of, me. But, her fond-

ness takes the form of expression habitual to all my friends. My mother advises me. "I have no means of helping the poor boy in his many difficulties," she deplures, "except by giving him advice—if he would only take *that*!" Heaven knows, I do take it, most submissively, in enormous doses; but I cannot say that I always find it agree with me. My mother's favourite formula is a prescription to the effect that I should make myself master of my own house. But, I can't. I am the most contemptible person on the premises. All that belongs to me of the establishment is a small obscure room, where I endeavour to write, but where I am in a perpetual state of siege from the real lords of the soil. I am at the mercy of my youngest son, Jubbins (a nickname, of course), who makes in-roads upon me at discretion, giving me stern orders for pencils, paper, books, and even compelling me to perform menial offices of toilet for his comfort and accommodation. He, too, is one of my advisers, though he can scarcely yet articulate the English language. No later than yesterday, he strongly recommended the policy of my putting down my pen, and taking him, Jubbins, to see a Punch and Judy reported to be then performing in the neighbourhood. My mother advises me to be a little more strict with the servants. Why doesn't she advise the servants to be a little less strict with me? I am hopelessly at their mercy, and they are pitiless. They hide my slippers, light fires with my manuscripts, keep important letters unposted on the kitchen dresser for days together; they burn my mutton-chops, they neglect to put salt into my soup. My mother advises me to discharge them. She does so, frequently; but I never find myself any the better for it. As a crowning impossibility, my mother advises me to *make* my wife exert herself, and show a little spirit. My wife is an invalid. She can't exert herself, and has no spirit to show. "If you would take my advice," says my mother, "as, surely, you might, with your vast abilities, you would find your affairs in a very different position." I am tired of repeating to her again and again that I do take her advice. Only I don't seem to know what to do with it when I have taken it.

The editor of the Hair-on-End Magazine advises me to give up prose fiction, for which he declares I have no real aptitude, and confine myself exclusively to poetry. "You *can* do these things, you know," he writes, "if you only choose to apply yourself. Send us one of your appalling verse stories every week, and there is a comfortable income at your feet." It takes me a month to write a verse story.

Sloat, the manager, who really has a great esteem for me, refuses my farces one after another, and says, "Take my advice, my dear fellow: don't fritter away your really great talents in writing this kind of stuff. We can get blockheads by the dozen to do this, as well as we want it done. Tuck up your sleeves at once, set to work, and give us a comedy: something that will live." But how am I to live in the mean time?

I painted portraits for a livelihood when I was a boy. I still amuse myself with oils and brushes from time to time. My friend McCorquodale, the landscape painter, bullies me fearfully for wasting my abilities on literature. "Take my advice," he says: "throw up the pen-and-ink bosh, go into the country and work for three or four months at elm-trees, and your fortune's made. However, if you *will* be a fool, it isn't my fault." (Nobody ever said it was; it is simply my misfortune!) Blotman, the parliamentary reporter, on the other hand, looks coldly on my unfinished canvases, and observes, "How the deuce can you expect to support your family in comfort, when you neglect your legitimate occupation for this kind of trifling? A good fire in the house to burn all these easels, brushes, and canvases, would be the best thing that could happen to you. Go in for political leaders. *That's* your line."

A strange vision occurred to me the other night as I lay sleeping (rather uncomfortably, in consequence of my having yielded to somebody's advice to sup upon pickled salmon). I dreamed that I saw a jury of my advisers sitting in judgment upon a Leopard and an Ethiopian.

The debate was angry and protracted; but, a resolution was finally carried, *nem. con.*, to the effect that the Leopard should be forthwith ordered to change his spots, and the Ethiopian commanded to become a white man.

DRIFT.

"DRIFT"—from the Conquest down to the execution of Charles the First, over a period of pretty nearly six centuries, during the reigns of twenty-five sovereigns of England, when "absolute monarchy," "ecclesiastical supremacy," "military despotism," "feudal oligarchy," "popular parliaments," had all been tried and found wanting, from their inherent selfishness, and after mistakes innumerable had been hustled into a decent respect for each other, and the three estates of the realm had begun, glimmeringly, to understand how far each might go, and no further. "Drift" from the stormy, wide, ever-changing, restless, awful ocean of time which washes the boundaries of the continents of ten hundred and sixty-six, and sixteen hundred and forty-nine. "Drift"—*débris*, *disjecta membra*, or salvage, significant, symbolical, speaking unmistakably of the race, clime, and circumstance whence the scattered morsels came, and whose value and native worth, cleansed from the rude treatment of tempest-tossing, from the scum, the foam, the barnacles, or bilge-water, or from their own indigenous impurities, it will be the aim of me, Mathew Mole, to set before my friends of to-day and to-morrow, as tokens of yesterday, which none can dispute or disdain.

I shall not mind whence I get my memorabilia: from Libraries, Museums, or Record Repositories—from old books, manuscripts, rolls, deeds, or documents—from state papers, or family or personal correspondence, which alone

survives the frail hand that penned it, I shall snatch my scraps; and believe me, like the continental chiffonnier, I shall throw nothing into my basket of which I have not some appreciative sense or comprehension.

Here, for instance, is a royal letter, written, five hundred and forty-four years ago, by King Edward the First, then aged sixty-three years of age, touching the performance of an operation with the fleam by the barber-surgeon or monk leech of the district, upon the person (as I make out) of the Queen Margaret, the sister of the fourth Philip of France, surnamed Le Bel, which lady King Edward had married but three years previously:

"DEAR COUSIN,—We have well understood the Letters which you sent us by the Bearer of these presents, and with respect to your entreaties that we should let you know whether we feel better now while on our journey through the Country than we did before, we inform you that each day is better than the last, and that we are already—God be thanked!—in good health. And if you would vouchsafe to inquire into the manner of our entry into St. Albans, you would know how we comport ourself in our Country Progress. And, touching that which you tell us that your physician has advised you to be blooded next Tuesday, which you are loth to do until our will is ascertained, we let you know that we will and command you to allow yourself to be blooded in any place and at any time you shall think most fit for the estate of your body. Concerning your prayer to ascertain you of our progress between Langley and Banstead we know nothing certainly as yet, and will give you no account thereof until we know that you have been blooded. Therefore we will that you cause yourself to be blooded before coming to Banstead, as bleeding will be more easy to you than after your arrival, for you will then be in a greater commotion than you are now. Therefore we will that you cause yourself to be blooded at the earliest and best opportunity for your relief. And as soon as you shall let us know how you have been blooded, we will tell you all about our journey from Langley to Banstead.

"St. Albans, May 4."

[1305, 33 Edward I.]

The original letter, of which the foregoing is a close translation, is without date, but the deficiency is to be supplied by thus tracing the progress of the king by other documentary evidence. On Saturday, May 1, 1305, King Edward the First entered St. Albans, and leaving on the 5th, returned to Westminster through Ware. He then went to Langley, stayed there till the 10th, and then again betook himself to Westminster. On the 12th he was to be found at Watford and Greenford; on the 14th at Harrow, and on the 18th at Kennington, whence he departed on the 26th, and reached Banstead (named in our letter) on the same day.

As to the bleeding, and the place where it was performed, it is as well to note that in the old monastic houses where the living was good,

and the lives of the brethren sedentary, there were appointed times for bleeding which were called the "tempora minutionis." In the *Liber ordinis S. Victoris parisiensis* the following rules were laid down:

"This is the order of bleeding. Five times in the year shall general bleedings be accomplished, out of which, except under peril of grave sickness, shall a license for bleeding be by no means granted to any one. For it is thus frequently allowed to prevent the necessity of it, except on these occasions. The 1st is in September, the 2nd before Advent, the 3rd before Lent, the 4th after Easter, and the 5th after Pentecost: and the bleeding shall last for three days. After the third day the brethren shall come to Matins and otherwise meet together, so that on the 4th day they may receive absolution."

In the *Chronicle of St. Trudo* it is stated, "When the Brethren were bled, the whole assembly were bled together, in silence, and with psalmody, sitting orderly in one Celle." (Truly a cheerful assembly!)

The instrument used was called the "Lanceola," whence our own term "Lancet."

PORTRAIT OF AN AUTHOR, PAINTED BY HIS PUBLISHER.

IN TWO SITTINGS.

THE Author was a Frenchman; and he has been dead nearly nine years. Over the whole continent of Europe, wherever the literature of France has penetrated, his readers are numbered by tens of thousands. Women of all ranks and orders have singled him out, long since, as the marked man, among modern writers of fiction, who most profoundly knows and most subtly appreciates their sex in its strength and in its weakness. Men, whose critical judgment is widely and worthily respected, have declared that he is the deepest and truest observer of human nature whom France has produced since the time of Molière. Unquestionably, he ranks as one of the few great geniuses who appear by ones and twos, in century after century of authorship, and who leave their mark ineffaceably on the literature of their age. And yet, in spite of this widely-extended continental fame, and this indisputable right and title to enjoy it, there is probably no civilised country in the Old World in which he is so little known as in England. Among all the readers—a large class in these islands—who are, from various causes, unaccustomed to study French literature in its native language, there are probably very many who have never even heard of the name of HONORÉ DE BALZAC?

Unaccountable as it may appear at first sight, the reason why the illustrious author of *Eugénie Grandet*, *Le Père Goriot*, and *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, happens to be so little known to the general public of England is, on the surface of it, easy enough to discover. Balzac is little known, because he has been little translated. An English version of *Eugénie Grandet* was advertised, lately, as one of a cheap series of novels.

And the present writer has some indistinct recollection of meeting, many years since, with a translation of *La Peau de Chagrin*. But so far as he knows, excepting the instances of these two books, not one other work, out of the whole number of ninety-seven fictions, long and short, which proceeded from the same fertile pen, has been offered to our own readers in our own language. Immense help has been given in this country to the reputations of Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, and Eugène Sue: no help whatever, or next to none, has been given to Balzac—although he is regarded in France (and rightly regarded, in some respects) as a writer of fiction superior to all three.

Many causes, too numerous to be elaborately traced within the compass of a single article, have probably contributed to produce this singular instance of literary neglect. It is not to be denied, for example, that serious difficulties stand in the way of translating Balzac, which are caused by his own peculiarities of style and treatment. His French is not the clear, graceful, neatly-turned French of Voltaire and Rousseau. It is a strong, harsh, solidly vigorous language of his own; now flashing into the most exquisite felicities of expression, and now again involved in an obscurity which only the closest attention can hope to penetrate. A special man, not hurried for time, and not easily brought to the end of his patience, might give the English equivalent of Balzac with admirable effect. But ordinary translating of him by average workmen would only lead, through the means of feeble parody, to the result of utter failure.

The difficulties, again, caused by his style of treatment are not to be lightly estimated, in considering the question of presenting this author to our own general public. The peculiarity of Balzac's literary execution is that he never compromises the subtleties and delicacies of Art for any consideration of temporary effect. The framework in which his idea is set is always wrought with a loving minuteness which leaves nothing out. Everything which, in this writer's mind, can even remotely illustrate the characters that he depicts, must be elaborately conveyed to the minds of his readers before the characters themselves start into action. This quality of minute finish, of reiterated refining, which is one of Balzac's great merits, so far as "foreign audiences" are concerned, is another of the hindrances, so far as an English audience is concerned, in the way of translating him.

Allowing all due weight to the force of these obstacles; and further admitting that Balzac lays himself open to grave objection (on the part of that unhappily large section of the English public which obstinately protests against the truth wherever the truth is painful), as a writer who sternly insists on presenting the dreary aspects of human life, literally, exactly, nakedly, as he finds them—making these allowances, and many more if more be needful—it is still impossible not to regret, for the sake of readers themselves, that worthy English versions of the best

works of this great writer are not added to the national library of translated literature. Towards the latter part of his career, Balzac's own taste in selection of subject seems to have become vitiated. His later novels, consummately excellent as some of them were in a literary sense, are assuredly, in a moral sense, not to be defended against the grave accusation of being needlessly and even horribly repulsive. But no objections of this sort apply to the majority of the works which he produced when he was in the prime of his life and his faculties. The conception of the character of "Eugénie Grandet" is one of the purest, tenderest, and most beautiful things in the whole range of fiction; and the execution of it is even worthy of the idea. If the translation already accomplished of this book be only creditably executed, it may be left to speak for itself. But there are other fictions of the writer which deserve the same privilege, and which have not yet obtained it, "*La Recherche de l'Absolu*,"—a family picture which, for truth, delicacy, and pathos, has been surpassed by no novelist of any nation or any time; a literary achievement in which a new and an imperishable character (the exquisitely-beautiful character of the wife) has been added to the great gallery of fiction—remains still unknown to the general public of England. "*Le Père Goriot*"—which, though it unveils some of the hidden corruptions of Parisian life, unveils them nobly in the interests of that highest morality belonging to no one nation and no one sect—"Le Père Goriot," which stands first and foremost among all the writer's works, which has drawn the tears of thousands from the purest sources, has its appeal still left to make to the sympathies of English readers. Other shorter stories, scattered about the "*Scènes de la Vie Privée*," the "*Scènes de la Vie de Province*," and the "*Scènes de la Vie Parisienne*," are as completely unknown to a certain circle of readers in this country, and as unquestionably deserve careful and competent translation, as the longer and more elaborate productions of Balzac's inexhaustible pen. Reckoning these shorter stories, there are at least a dozen of his highest achievements in fiction which might be safely rendered into English, which might form a series by themselves, and which no sensible Englishwoman could read and be, either intellectually or morally, the worse for them.

Thus much, in the way of necessary preliminary comment on the works of this author, and on their present position in reference to the English public. Readers who may be sufficiently interested in the subject to desire to know something next about the man himself, may now derive this information from a singular, and even from a unique source. The Life of Balzac has been lately written by his publisher, of all the people in the world! This is a phenomenon in itself; and the oddity of it is still further increased by the fact that the publisher was brought to the brink of ruin by the author, that he mentions this circumstance in writing his life, and that it does not detract one iota

from his evidently sincere admiration for the great man with whom he was once so disastrously connected in business. Here is surely an original book, in an age when originality grows harder and harder to meet with—a book containing disclosures which will perplex and dismay every admirer of Balzac who cannot separate the man from his works—a book which presents one of the most singular records of human eccentricity, so far as the hero of it is concerned, and of human credulity so far as the biographer is concerned, which has probably ever been published for the amusement and bewilderment of the reading world.

The title of this singular work is, *Portrait Intime De Balzac: sa Vie, son Humeur et son Caractère*. Par Edmond Werdet, son ancien Libraire-Editeur. Before, however, we allow Monsieur Werdet to relate his own personal experience of the celebrated writer, it will be advisable to introduce the subject by giving an outline of the struggles, the privations, and the disappointments which marked the early life of Balzac, and which, doubtless, influenced for the worse his after-character. These particulars are given by Monsieur Werdet in the form of an episode, and are principally derived, on his part, from information afforded by the author's sister.

Honoré de Balzac was born in the city of Tours, on the sixteenth of May, seventeen hundred and ninety-nine. His parents were people of rank and position in the world. His father held a legal appointment in the council-chamber of Louis the Sixteenth. His mother was the daughter of one of the directors of the public hospitals of Paris. She was much younger than her husband, and brought him a rich dowry. Honoré was her first-born; and he retained throughout life his first feeling of childish reverence for his mother. That mother suffered the unspeakable affliction of seeing her illustrious son taken from her by death at the age of fifty years. Balzac breathed his last in the kind arms which had first caressed him on the day of his birth.

His father, from whom he evidently inherited much of the eccentricity of his character, is described as a compound of Montaigne, Rabelais, and Uncle Toby—a man in manners, conversation, and disposition generally, of the quaintly original sort. On the breaking out of the Revolution, he lost his court situation, and obtained a place in the commissariat department of the army of the North. This appointment he held for some years. It was of the greater importance to him, in consequence of the change for the worse produced in the pecuniary circumstances of the family by the convulsion of the Revolution.

At the age of seven years Balzac was sent to the college of Vendôme; and for seven years more there he remained. This period of his life was never a pleasant one in his remembrance. The reduced circumstances of his family exposed him to much sordid persecution and ridicule from the other boys; and he got on but

little better with the masters. They reported him as idle and incapable—or, in other words, as ready enough to devour all sorts of books on his own desultory plan, but hopelessly obstinate in resisting the educational discipline of the school. This time of his life he has reproduced in one of the strangest and the most mystical of all his novels, *La Vie Intellectuelle de Louis Lambert*.

On reaching the critical age of fourteen, his intellect appears to have suffered under a species of eclipse, which occurred very suddenly and mysteriously, and the cause of which neither his masters nor the medical men were able to explain. He himself always declared in after-life, with a touch of his father's quaintness, that his brain had been attacked by "a congestion of ideas." Whatever the cause might be, the effect was so serious that the progress of his education had to be stopped; and his removal from the college followed as a matter of course. Time, care, quiet, and breathing his native air, gradually restored him to himself; and he was ultimately enabled to complete his studies at two private schools. Here again, however, he did nothing to distinguish himself among his fellow-pupils. He read incessantly, and preserved the fruits of his reading with marvellous power of memory; but the school-teaching, which did well enough for ordinary boys, was exactly the species of teaching from which the essentially original mind of Balzac recoiled in disgust. All that he felt and did at this period has been carefully reproduced by his own pen in the earlier pages of *Le Lys dans la Vallée*.

Badly as he got on at school, he managed to imbibe a sufficient quantity of conventional learning to entitle him, at the age of eighteen, to his degree of Bachelor of Arts. He was destined for the law; and after attending the legal lectures in the various Institutions of Paris, he passed his examination by the time he was twenty, and then entered a notary's office in the capacity of clerk. There were two other clerks to keep him company, who hated the drudgery of the law as heartily as he hated it himself. One of them was the future author of *The Mysteries of Paris*, Eugene Sue; the other was the famous critic, Jules Janin.

After he had been engaged in this office, and in another, for more than three years, a legal friend, who was under great obligations to Balzac the father, offered to give up his business as a notary to Balzac the son. To the great scandal of the family, Honoré resolutely refused the offer. His reason was that he had determined to be the greatest writer in France. His relations began by laughing at him, and ended by growing angry with him. But nothing moved Honoré. His vanity was of the calm, settled sort; and his own conviction that his business in life was simply to be a famous man proved too strong to be shaken by anybody.

While he and his family were at war on this point, a change for the worse occurred in the elder Balzac's official circumstances. He was superannuated. The diminution of income thus

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produced was followed by a pecuniary catastrophe. He had embarked almost the whole of his own little remaining property and his wife's in two speculations; and they both failed. No resource was now left him but to retire to a small country house in the neighbourhood of Paris, which he had purchased in his prosperous days, and to live there as well as might be on the wreck of his lost fortune. Honoré, sticking fast to that hopeless business of becoming a great man, was, by his own desire, left alone in a Paris garret, with an allowance of five pounds English a month, which was all the kind father could spare to feed, clothe, and lodge the wrong-headed son.

And now, without a literary friend to help him in all Paris, alone in his wretched attic, with his deal-table and his trundle-bed, his dog-eared books, his bescrewed papers, his wild vanity, and his ravenous hunger for fame, Balzac stripped resolutely for the great fight. He was then twenty-three years old—a sturdy fellow to look at, with a big, jovial face, and a strong square forehead, topped by a very untidy and superfluous allowance of long tangled hair. His only difficulty at starting was what to begin upon. After consuming many lonely months in sketching out comedies, operas, and novels, he finally obeyed the one disastrous rule which seems to admit of no exception in the early lives of men of letters, and fixed the whole bent of his industry and his genius on the production of a tragedy. After infinite pains and long labour, the great work was completed. The subject was Cromwell; and the treatment, in Balzac's hands, appears to have been so inconceivably bad, that even his own family—to say nothing of other judicious friends—told him in the plainest terms, when he read it to them, that he had perpetrated a signal failure. Modest men might have been discouraged by this. Balzac took his manuscript back to his garret, standing higher in his own estimation than ever. "I will give up being a great dramatist," he told his parents at parting, "and I will be a great novelist instead." The vanity of the man expressed itself with this sublime disregard of ridicule all through his life. It was a precious quality to him—it is surely (however unquestionably offensive it may be to our friends) a precious quality to all of us. What man ever yet did anything great, without beginning with a profound belief in his own untried powers?

Confident as ever, therefore, in his own resources, Balzac now took up the pen once more—this time, in the character of novelist. But another and a serious check awaited him at the outset. Fifteen months of solitude, privation, and reckless hard writing—months which are recorded in the pages of "*La Peau de Chagrin*" with a fearful and pathetic truth drawn straight from the bitterest of all experiences, the experience of studious poverty—had reduced him to a condition of bodily weakness which made all present exertion of his mental powers simply hopeless, and which obliged him to take refuge—a worn-out, wasted man, at the age of twenty-

three—in his father's quiet little country house. Here, under his mother's care, his exhausted energies slowly revived; and here, in the first days of his convalescence, he returned, with the grim resolution of despair, to working out the old dream in the garret, to resuming the old hopeless, hapless business of making himself a great man. It was under his father's roof, during the time of his slow recovery, that the youthful fictions of Balzac were produced. The strength of his belief in his own resources and his own future gave him also the strength, in relation to these first efforts, to rise above his own vanity, and to see plainly that he had not yet learnt to do himself full justice. His early novels bore on their title-pages a variety of feigned names, for the starving, struggling author was too proud to acknowledge them, so long as they failed to satisfy his own conception of what his own powers could accomplish. These first efforts—now included in his collected works, and comprising among them two stories, "*Jane la Pâle*" and "*Le Vicairé des Ardenes*," which show unquestionable dawns of the genius of a great writer—were originally published by the lower and more rapacious order of booksellers, and did as little towards increasing his means as towards establishing his reputation. Still, he forced his way slowly and resolutely through poverty, obscurity, and disappointment, nearer and nearer to the promised land which no eye saw but his own—a greater man, by far, at this hard period of his adversity than at the more trying after-time of his prosperity and his fame. One by one, the heavy years rolled on till he was a man of thirty; and then the great prize which he had so long toiled for, dropped within his reach at last. In the year eighteen hundred and twenty-nine, the famous "*Physiologie du Mariage*" was published; and the starveling of the Paris garret became a name and a power in French literature.

In England, this book would have been universally condemned as an unpardonable exposure of the most sacred secrets of domestic life. It unveils the whole social side of Marriage in its innermost recesses, and exhibits it alternately in its bright and dark aspects with a marvellous minuteness of observation, a profound knowledge of human nature, and a daring eccentricity of style and arrangement which amply justify the extraordinary success of the book on its first appearance in France. It may be more than questionable, judging from the English point of view, whether such a subject should ever have been selected for any other than the most serious, reverent, and forbearing treatment. Setting this objection aside, however, in consideration of the French point of view, it cannot be denied that the merits of the *Physiology of Marriage*, as a piece of writing, were by no means over-estimated by the public to which it was addressed. In a literary sense, the book would have done credit to a man in the maturity of his powers. As the work of a man whose intellectual life was only beginning, it was such an achievement as is not often recorded in the history of modern literature.

This first triumph of the future novelist—obtained, curiously enough, by a book which was not a novel—failed to smoothe the way onward and upward for Balzac as speedily and pleasantly as might have been supposed. He had another stumble on that hard road of his, before he fairly started on the career of success. Soon after the publication of the *Physiology of Marriage*, an unlucky idea of strengthening his resources by trading in literature, as well as by writing books, seems to have occurred to him. He tried book-selling and printing; proved himself to be, in both cases, probably the very worst man of business who ever lived and breathed in this world; failed in the most hopeless way, with the most extraordinary rapidity; and so learnt at last, by the cruel teaching of experience, that his one fair chance of getting money lay in sticking fast to his pen for the rest of his days. In the next ten years of his life that pen produced the noble series of fictions which influenced French literature far and wide, and which will last in public remembrance long after the miserable errors and inconsistencies of the writer's personal character are forgotten. This was the period when Balzac was in the full enjoyment of his matured intellectual powers and his enviable public celebrity; and this was also the golden time when his publisher and biographer first became acquainted with him. Now, therefore, Monsieur Werdet may be encouraged to come forward and take the post of honour as narrator of the strange story that is still to be told; for now he is placed in the fit position to address himself intelligibly, as well as amusingly, to an English audience.

The story opens with the starting of Monsieur Werdet as a publisher in Paris, on his own account. The modest capital at his command amounted to just one hundred and twenty pounds English; and his leading idea, on beginning business, was to become the publisher of Balzac.

He had already entered into transactions, on a large scale, with his favourite author, in the character of agent for a publishing-house of high standing. He had been very well received, on that first occasion, as a man representing undeniable capital and a great commercial position. On the second occasion, however, of his representing nobody but himself and nothing but the smallest of existing capitals, he very wisely secured the protection of an intimate friend of Balzac's, to introduce him as favourably as might be, for the second time. Accompanied by this gentleman, whose name was Monsieur Barbier, and carrying his capital in his pocket-book, the embryo publisher nervously presented himself in the sanctum sanctorum of the great man.

Monsieur Barbier having carefully explained the business on which they came, Balzac addressed himself, with an indescribable suavity and grandeur of manner, to anxious Monsieur Werdet.

"Ha! just so," said the eminent man. "You

are doubtless possessed, sir, of considerable capital? You are probably aware that no man can hope to publish for ME who is not prepared to assert himself magnificently in the matter of cash? I sell high—high—very high. And, not to deceive you—for I am incapable of suppressing the truth—I am a man who requires to be dealt with on the principle of considerable advances. Proceed, sir—I am prepared to listen to you."

But Monsieur Werdet was too cautious to proceed without strengthening his position before starting. He entrenched himself instantly behind his pocket-book.

One by one, the notes of the Bank of France, which formed the poor publisher's small capital, were drawn out of their snug hiding-place. Monsieur Werdet produced six of them, representing five hundred francs each (or, as before mentioned, a hundred and twenty pounds sterling), arranged them neatly and impressively in a circle on the table, and then cast himself on the author's mercy in an agitated voice, and in these words:

"Sir! behold my capital. There lies my whole fortune. It is yours in exchange for any book you please to write for me—"

At that point, to the horror and astonishment of Monsieur Werdet, his further progress was cut short by roars of laughter—formidable roars, as he himself expressly states—bursting from the lungs of the highly diverted Balzac.

"What remarkable simplicity!" exclaimed the great man. "Sir! I really admire you. Sir! do you actually believe that I—I—de Balzac—can so entirely forget what is due to myself as to sell you any conceivable species of fiction which is the product of MY PEN, for the sum of three thousand francs? You have come here, sir, to address an offer to me, without preparing yourself by previous reflection. If I felt so disposed, I should have every right to consider your conduct as unbecoming in the highest degree. But I don't feel so disposed. On the contrary, I can even allow your honest ignorance, your innocent confidence, to excuse you in my estimation—that is to say, to excuse you to a certain extent."

Between disappointment, indignation, and astonishment, Monsieur Werdet was struck dumb. His friend, Monsieur Barbier, therefore spoke for him, urging every possible consideration; and finally proposing that Balzac, if he was determined not to write a new story for three thousand francs, should at least sell one edition of an old one for that sum. Monsieur Barbier's arguments were admirably put: they lasted a long time; and when they had come to an end, they received this reply:

"Gentlemen!" cried Balzac, pushing back his long hair from his heated temples, and taking a fresh dip of ink, "you have wasted an hour of MY TIME in talking of trifles. I rate the pecuniary loss thus occasioned to me at two hundred francs. My time is my capital. I must work. Gentlemen! leave me." Having expressed himself in these hospitable terms, the

great man immediately resumed the process of composition.

Monsieur Werdet, naturally and properly indignant, immediately left the room. He was overtaken, after he had proceeded a little distance in the street, by his friend Barbier, who had remained behind to remonstrate.

"You have every reason to be offended," said Barbier. "His conduct is inexcusable. But pray don't suppose that your negotiation is broken off. I know him better than you do; and I tell you that you have nailed Balzac. He wants money, and before three days are over your head he will return your visit?"

"If he does," replied Werdet, "I'll pitch him out of window."

"No, you won't," said Barbier. "In the first place, it is an extremely uncivil proceeding to pitch a man out of window; and, as a naturally polite gentleman, you are incapable of committing a breach of good manners. In the second place, rude as he has been to you, Balzac is not the less a man of genius; and, as such, he is just the man of whom you, as a publisher, stand in need. Wait patiently; and in a day or two you will see him, or hear from him again."

Barbier was right. Three days afterwards, the following satisfactory communication was received by Monsieur Werdet:

"My brain, sir, was so prodigiously preoccupied by work uncongenial to my fancy, when you visited me the other day, that I was incapable of comprehending otherwise than imperfectly what it was that you wanted of me.

"To-day, my brain is not preoccupied. Do me the favour to come and see me at four o'clock.

"A thousand civilities.

"DE BALZAC."

Monsieur Werdet viewed this singular note in the light of a fresh impertinence. On consideration, however, he acknowledged it, and curtly added that important business would prevent his accepting the appointment proposed to him.

In two days more, friend Barbier came with a second invitation from the great man. But Monsieur Werdet steadily refused it. "Balzac has already been playing his game with me," he said. "Now it is my turn to play my game with Balzac. I mean to keep him waiting four days longer."

At the end of that time, Monsieur Werdet once more entered the sanctum sanctorum. On this second occasion, Balzac's graceful politeness was indescribable. He deplored the rarity of intelligent publishers. He declared his deep sense of the importance of an intelligent publisher's appearance in the literary horizon. He expressed himself as quite enchanted to be enabled to remark the said appearance, to welcome it, and even to deal with it. Polite as he was by nature, Monsieur Werdet had no chance this time against Monsieur de Balzac. In the race of civility the publisher was now nowhere, and the author made all the running.

The interview, thus happily begun, terminated in a most agreeable transaction on both sides. Balzac cheerfully locked up the six bank notes in his strong-box. Werdet, as cheerfully, retired with a written agreement in his empty pocket-book, authorising him to publish the second edition of *Le Médecin de Campagne*—by no means, it may be remarked in parenthesis, one of the best to select of the novels of Balzac.

Here, leaving him at the consummation of his hopes, started in business with an edition to sell of his favourite author, we must part with Monsieur Werdet, who has now arrived, in the course of his portrait-painting, at the end of the First Sitting. How he and the great man subsequently got on together, and what extraordinary revelations of Balzac's character, mode of life, and habits of literary composition were subsequently vouchsafed to his long suffering publisher shall be recorded next week, as ingredients in those remaining portions of the Portrait which are left to be completed at the Second Sitting.

TRADE SONGS. THE SAILOR'S WIFE.

HUSH, my boy! hush, my blessing!

Winds and waters, are they wild?

Let them scream their noisy song;

Let them rave and rush along.

Thou'rt a sailor's child!

Father?—he is on the seas,

Far away, far away;

Mother?—thou art on her knees,

And she prays above thee,

Prays that God will love thee,

Night and day!

Are we poor? What wantest thou

With a ton of gold?

All the milk I have is thine;

Thou shalt have the days that shine;

I will bear the cold.

THE OLD SERVITOR.

Who travels on the road to-night?

It is the ancient Servitor.

He stumbles on from left to right;

He winks beneath the starry light;

The poor old Servitor!

An alms-man, he is poor and old;

No silver hath he now in store:

His face is thin, and pinched with cold;

His mantle grey is round him rolled;

The worn-out Servitor.

A staff is tottering in his hand:

He takes his journey o'er and o'er,

Without an object, gained or planned;

He withers on the fertile land,

The fallen Servitor.

He once had fortune—youth, and height,

And strength, and merry words in store;

He served a lord in his morning bright;

But now he wanes into the night,

The fading Servitor.

He hath his little alms-house room

(His name and number on the door);

But dark. Perhaps, amid the gloom,

He sees the Phantom of a tomb,

The poor, sad Servitor.

Time passes on; and he must soon
Lie silent on the silent shore;
Beyond the morning's golden tune—
Beyond the glory of the moon;
The old dead Servitor.

RIGHT THROUGH THE POST.

SOME TIME in the would-be merry month of May, of this present year, I became a letter—a highly privileged, registered letter—thanks to Mr. Page, the Inspector-General of Mails.

I was sent to the post in the hands of a boy—a boy who had often posted my letters, and who now posted me. In the regular course of things I should have gone to the nearest office—a grocer's shop—where I should have reposed, for a time, within hearing of the grinding of a steam coffee-mill, the bumping of sugar-packets upon the counter, and within the fragrant influence of the pounded mocha. This was, however, prevented by another boy, who met my carrier, just as he was dallying with his charge, having twice put me into the hole devoted to the inland and colonial mails, without relinishing his hold, and having twice withdrawn me in playful hesitation.

"Don't go a-chuckin' the letter in there," said the other boy.

"Why not?" asked my boy.

"Put 'em in a lamp-post broke short off," replied the other boy.

The two set off "up the road" for one of the pillar letter-boxes. Here much climbing, overing, and rough inspection of the novel office took place, and it was full ten minutes before I was dropped in. I felt as if I was sinking into the bowels of the earth, and I was much relieved when I found I had reached the bottom.

My companions were pretty numerous; but they were nearly all business letters. True, my pillar-box was in a business neighbourhood, not far from the chief office; but that was not alone sufficient to account for this fact. Although there are nearly twelve hundred of these useful traps set in different parts of the metropolis, to catch as many as possible of the five hundred and twenty-three millions of letters that flew last year, as thick as locusts, all over the land, there is a certain class of letters that never go into anything but a "regular" post-office, and probably never will. Any lady who could post a love-letter in one of the pillar-boxes must be an extremely unconventional, bold, and decided person, rather difficult to deal with harmoniously in the married state.

For this, and other reasons, my companions were full-sized, blue-wove, well-directed commercial letters; most of them announcing the approaching appearance of "our Mr. Binks," with well-assorted samples, in some expectant country town, and some of them conveying to some unsuspecting manufacturer the earliest intelligence of a heavy bad debt.

After we had reeled together very peaceably for about an hour, the door of our temporary prison-house was opened by a scarlet postman.

He looked in as a boy looks into a bird-trap which he has set in a field, or as a climbing urchin looks into a nest half full of eggs in the hollow of a tree. We were taken out without much ceremony or delay, and thrust into a bag; and in about ten minutes' time we found ourselves within the great inland sorting-office of the General Post-office.

Having been duly sorted, I am hurried, along with a crowd of companions, into a large bag, which is then sealed with a strong sealing-wax, and sent sliding down a smooth, shining, steep, inclined plane, into the daylight, and on to the platform of the Post-office northern court-yard. Here we find a number of guards and porters ready to receive us, in company with many other bags, and many really dismal, but rather would-be gay-looking, vehicles, drawn up to convey us to our different railway stations. These are the Post-office vans, furnished and horsed by contract, to the department, for a payment of ten thousand pounds per annum; and forming the only existing link that binds the railway-governed Post-office of to-day, to the mail-coach-governed Post-office of the past.

In shape, the Post-office van is like a prison-van; in colour it is a mixture of dingy black and red; and in condition it is dreadfully shattered and work-worn. Something of the hearse also mingles in its composition, and something of the omnibus. Its stand, when off duty, is at the end of Bedford-row, Holborn, where it basks in the sun, within a maze of posts, against the dead wall, looking with its companions like a crooked line of Chelsea pensioners waiting for the doctor. They are occasionally used as night-houses of refuge by the Arabs of St. Giles's, who have been known to ride in them asleep, to meet the morning mails at one of the railway stations.

In one of these vehicles I was stuffed with my companions, feeling very much (as the man must have felt who was placed in charge of us) as if I had been convicted of felony at the Old Bailey, and was going to a penal servitude of four years. Our destination was, however, Euston-square, and we were the first of some seventeen similar despatches in some seventeen similar vans, that form an unbroken stream between St. Martin's-le-Grand and the London and North-Western Railway terminus, every night from 7 P.M. to 8.30 P.M.

When we arrived, we were received by responsible Post-office clerks, passed through a special entrance made for us by the railway company in the side wall of the station, to save a few minutes of our valuable time, and deposited full in the front of our special train.

Our train was nearly all Post-office, and very little public. Those passengers who went by it had to pay a high tariff, and book their places some few days in advance. The train consisted of seven postal carriages and three passenger carriages (according to contract), all made up ready to start from 7 to 8.35 P.M. The passenger carriages were in front, the mail carriages behind, and the latter consisted of a sorting carriage and mail-bag van, or tender, for the Mid-

land and East Coast Mail; two sorting-offices and one tender for the North Mail (of which I was a part); and two other tenders employed for the intermediate mails. In two of the three sorting-offices in the train, the letters posted in London, or passing through London for the smaller towns on the line, and which have already undergone one divisional sortation at the Chief Office, are received, and again sorted for their final destination. In the third of the three sorting-offices in the train, the bags of cross-post letters from the towns arrived at on the road are received, sorted, and, in some cases, made-up and re-despatched, without the train having had to submit to a moment's delay, or to slacken its even pace of five-and-forty miles an hour. This is the Railway Post-office—properly so called—and into this department of the train—being a privileged letter—I was freely permitted to go.

The Railway Post-office was an exceedingly comfortable, well-furnished business carriage, broad as the gauge of the railway would allow, and as long as an ordinary room. The door was in the centre, having on its right a large window hole, shut up with a wooden shutter, and extending across nearly one-half of the carriage. Sometimes, the interior reminded me of a bagatelle-table, when I looked at the green cloth counters running along both ends, and nearly along the whole length of the back; sometimes, it reminded me of a large laundry, when I looked at the full bags lying unopened upon the floor, and the many empty bags (marked with the names of towns) hanging on pegs from the half wall on the left of the entrance door. Sometimes the hundred pigeon-holes and shelves which covered the three sides of the carriage immediately over the three counters, suggested an elaborate mahogany kitchen dresser, the spaces in which were being continually filled by maniac card-players, silently dealing out eternal, never-ending, ever-renewing packs of cards in a phantom game of whist.

As soon as the average speed of the train was attained, the bags on the floor were opened by the guard. Packets of letters, tied up with a string were thrown upon the back counter, to be divided amongst the three sorting clerks (the whole postal part of the train employs fourteen clerks, and six guards), dozens of newspapers, parcels, pill-boxes, sample-packets, thin cases of artificial flowers, rolls of music, and photographs done up in envelopes as large as tea-trays, were thrown upon the end counter at the head of the carriage; and the work began. Each man stood under a shaded globular lamp, shaking very much throughout his frame, and swaying to and fro like a circus-rider on his horse. The carriage is bright and glowing, and its speed is something between forty and fifty miles an hour. Letters are rapidly conveyed to the different pigeon-holes, sometimes high, sometimes low, sometimes on one side, and then on the other; sometimes, with a little hesitation when the writing which tells the post-town is not very clear (the name of the county

being placed on the letter is rather an hindrance to the sorters than otherwise); sometimes, with a circular wave of the hand, when the mind is in doubt, for a moment, where to deposit the letter; nearly always, more with regard to a sorting system peculiar to the sorter, than the names of the different towns which appear over the pigeon-holes. One clerk devotes himself to the registered letters, which have to be entered on a printed list; and he stands in a half-stooping posture, at a little distance from the counter, with a quill pen in one hand, and a small square board, on which is stretched the paper, clasped firmly in the other; jotting down the names and addresses in a touch-and-go style, which long practice has adapted to the motion of a flying, wabbling platform, that passes over a mile in a minute. The third clerk, preferring to be seated at his work, pulls out a swivel seat from under the counter that looks very much like a dark Westphalia ham.

After the guard has been busy, for a short time, at the head end of the carriage, seemingly in tossing the newspapers and packets about, like a potato-washer over a tub of potatoes, he takes another turn at the bags, and makes up the sealed mail for the first post-station. When he has tied and sealed the dirty white skin bag, which contains the allowance of letters for one small town, and a score of smaller villages, he straps it up in a dark brown leather covering until it looks like a pedlar's pack, and then he proceeds to attach it to the external machinery of the carriage. He is an experienced guard, familiar with every river, bridge, and point, who knows, by the sound of the roaring and clattering train, at what moment to "let down the net, and put out for delivery," as the printed instructions phrase it. The shutter of the large single window-hole is pushed down in its groove, and a gust of cold night air, laden with the scent of earth and grass, and trees, comes freshly into the hot and busy carriage. The guard looks out along the dark line of rising and falling hedges, and through the trees at the low horizon, for some expected signal light, and then proceeds to the door, which he pushes back in its side groove. Reaching out his arm round the window side of the carriage, he drags in an iron bar, that swings by several hinges, at the extremity of which he fastens the packed mail, now lying on the floor, by means of a spring, and casts it away from the carriage over the rails, where it drops and hangs suspended at right angles, like a heavy bait put out to catch fish. This operation completed, he returns to the open window, where he pushes down a mechanical arrangement, which forms a projecting receiving net, and which sounds, in its descent, as if the whole carriage were falling to pieces. After a few seconds' suspense, the bait appears to have taken; the carriage passes under several bags of letters, which are suspended from the postal station, and over a similar net, projecting from the station also; the machinery of the railway acts upon the machinery of the carriage; the one bag drops into the roadside net—or into a roadside ditch, as any

one would suppose who merely observed the operation from the carriage; at the same instant, several bags come tumbling into the carriage net, as if from the moon. Before the guard has hauled them all in, dragged up the net, and shut out the fresh night air once more, the whole train has shot half a mile beyond the place where the Railway Post-office has effected this advantageous exchange.

The guard instantly plunges head first amongst his new treasures, which he opens, and presents to the sorting clerks. Letters that have been brought by hand and cart from some quiet village in the heart of Hertfordshire, and whose destination is some quiet village in the heart of Kent, are now careering towards the north with the speed of the wind, to be sorted, made up, and sent back, along their proper arteries, at the next postal station. Local papers going to London to set an example to the metropolitan press; London papers sucked dry by provincial politicians, and sent across the country to some fourth or fifth day's reader; letters from country grocers to their London merchants, which smell of tobacco, cheese, and tea; dead letters from the country post town, done up in a funeral black bag, and money-order communications encased in large coarse envelopes, the colour of golden orange; neat little pink notes from Lady Fusbos in the country to the Hon. Miss Busfos in town, one posted close upon the other, and the latter rendering the former null and void; letters from country lawyers about rents and land, addressed in that unmistakable clear hand which is recognised as the law clerk's with half a glance; letters from country drapers to that firm not far from Watling-street, stating that it will be utterly impossible to meet that bill which will fall due on the fourth of that month; letters from the indefatigable Mr. Binks, the commercial traveller, enclosed in printed envelopes, addressed to "the firm," and containing long sheets of orders to a highly satisfactory amount; letters with narrow black borders, that show how death has distantly appeared to some household, and letters with broad black borders, that show how his dark shadow has fallen very near; letters with the whitest of envelopes, and the firmest of contents, which tell of something more cheerful than the grave; letters in brown and yellow envelopes, with equally solid contents, which convey some country auctioneer's card to view a property that is advertised for sale; letters that are warm and affectionate, free and easy, cold and dignified; letters where compliments are presented, where Sir gradually thaws into Dear sir, Dear sir into My dear sir, and so on through Tomkins, Henry, Harry, Hal, Old fellow, and Everlasting brick; letters that are registered in heaven, letters that are registered on earth, and letters that are registered in the other extreme—these, and many more whose contents could not be guessed by their exteriors,

are amongst the treasures which our guard has hauled in by the way.

Other baits were hung out at different points of our journey, always with the same successful result; and after we got to Rugby the work became doubly heavy as far as Preston, and our three clerks were increased to six. Heavy bags, it is true, were taken out at places where we stopped, but bags that were equally heavy were generally taken in, and the labour was always being renewed from the point where it seemed to leave off. The sorting from Rugby became more fast and furious; the ventilation of the carriage became more doubtful, and the scent of the sealing-wax more strong; the dust increased in a very perceptible degree; the sorters became more fishy-eyed and worn out, especially as they approached Preston—the town where they were to be relieved. The five thousand letters, which each officer is bound to sort during one journey, whether it be long or short, were just finished by each individual as the signal whistle announced the entry into the not very sightly station of the old Lancashire town. I leaped off the end counter, where I had long been sorted, cut of the way, in my character as a letter, and at once reassumed my character of a bed-seeking, coffee-drinking man. The idle apprentices who had been tossing restlessly upon their costly, luxurious, first-class couches throughout the night, might have looked with envy upon the group of industrious apprentices who had never found a moment of time from London to Preston that hung, in the slightest degree, heavily upon their hands. Another batch of industrious apprentices were waiting to fill the vacant places, and before the inexperienced traveller had ascertained where he was, the Railway Post-office and its adjuncts were again upon their way. Dozens of such offices were at the same moment flying all over the country—flying as they began to fly some twenty years ago—they have, one or other, never ceased to fly from that hour to this. They will never cease to fly to the end of time.

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